

Three Political Voices from the Age of Justinian

Agapetus, *Advice to the Emperor*

Dialogue on Political Science

Paul the Silentiary, *Description of Hagia Sophia*

*Translated with notes and an introduction
by Peter N. Bell*

TH



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Volume 52

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PETER N. BELL

Liverpool
University
Press



First published 2009
Liverpool University Press
4 Cambridge Street
Liverpool, L69 7ZU

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A British Library CIP Record is available.

ISBN 978-1-84631-209-0 limp

Set in Times by
Koinonia, Manchester
Printed in the European Union by
Bell and Bain Ltd, Glasgow

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PREFACE

The sixth century CE in the late Roman world was a period of political, intellectual and cultural transformation in response to long-standing and often painfully acute pressures, both internal and external; these were to give us, by the next century, what we now think of as 'Byzantium'. Despite the efforts of an increasingly autocratic and intolerant regime, we know something about what intellectuals in Constantinople especially thought about issues of their day, not least through the writings of Procopius, Agathias or John the Lydian. We know quite a lot more about what the regime and the churches *wanted* everyone to think – through, for example, the rhetoric of laws, architectural display and imperial ceremonial, or the homilies of bishops, church mosaics and even the epistles of the emperor Justinian himself. But there are other, unfairly neglected, figures who can help us navigate better through the obscurities of a changing political universe. Some are barely read, like the unknown author of the *Dialogue on Political Science*; or now largely forgotten, like Agapetus; or exploited chiefly as a quarry for art historians and philologists, like Paul the Silentiary's *Description of Hagia Sophia*. Worse, they are barely accessible to those without knowledge of (particularly abstruse) Greek, while much modern scholarship, itself relatively sparse, comes in Italian or German versions only. Works of both great intrinsic interest and historical significance are thus denied to many students of late antique and Byzantine history in the English-speaking world.

This collection, therefore, aims to make these important texts available to all those, not least beginning students, who want to read them and also to set them within their wider socio-political context, thereby illuminating the society as well as the writers. (I apologise in advance to literary scholars and art historians for all that I have omitted.) I also acknowledge that some subjects, notably the religious climate of the later sixth century and its implications for intellectual expression, have not received the detailed treatment they deserve. But I intend to put this right in my forthcoming book on social conflict in the age of Justinian. And, in the meantime, I have included enough material, I hope, both to stimulate reflection and to enable those

interested to follow up the issues for themselves.

I hope also, for I believe it to be a centrally important function of history, that these three works will encourage some readers to reflect on the wider issues they raise. These are not confined to the later sixth century, but remain of great political salience: the nature and importance of securing legitimacy, for instance, for any successful regime; or the role and significance of presentation and spin – which transcend the particular, time-bound conception of the emperor as the imitation of God that played so influential a role in the late Roman and Byzantine polity, and in our authors.

I could not have attempted such a task unaided, not least because I only arrived late in life in academia after a career in the UK Civil Service dealing, in Northern Ireland, with many issues touched on by the authors here. So I am immensely grateful to Wolfson College for providing me with an academic base. I am no less grateful to Phyllis Bennett, Phil Booth, Charles Bradley, Averil Cameron, Gillian Clark, Mark Edwards, Miriam Griffin, Michael Maas, Ruth Macrides and Michael Whitby. Special thanks are due to Philip Rance for his outstanding help in an area, late Roman military affairs, where I was a complete novice. Nor dare I pass over my punctilious editor, Mary Whitby, for the many improvements she has suggested and for teaching me more about text-preparation than I had ever dreamt there was to learn. Most important, however, there is my home team: Jake has continued to show just how supportive a dog with a commitment to late antique history can be; without Jennifer, and her heroic efforts in proof-reading and editing, there would quite simply have been no book. Whether this is a good or a bad thing is for others to say. But it is their book.

April 2009

Peter Bell
Wolfson College, Oxford

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>a.</i>	<i>anno</i> (in the year)
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>AM</i>	<i>Anno Mundi</i> (year of the world)
Amm. Marc.	Ammianus Marcellinus
<i>Anth. Pal.</i>	<i>Anthologia Palatina</i> (Palatine Anthology)
<i>AT</i>	<i>Antiquité Tardive</i>
BCE	Before the Common Era (or BC)
<i>BMGS</i>	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
<i>Bldgs.</i>	Procopius, <i>Buildings</i> (<i>de Aedificiis</i>)
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
C	century (e.g. C6)
C.	<i>Constitutio</i> (Imperial law): e.g. <i>C. Haec</i> (528), <i>C. Summa</i> (529), <i>C. Tanta</i> (533), <i>C. Omnem</i> (533), <i>C. Imperatoriam Maiestatem</i> (533), <i>C. Cordi</i> (534)
<i>CAH</i>	<i>Cambridge Ancient History</i>
CE	Common Era (or AD)
<i>CIC</i>	<i>Corpus Iuris Civilis</i> (<i>Corpus of Civil Law</i>)
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Codex Justinianus</i> (<i>Justinianic Code</i>)
<i>Coll. Avell.</i>	<i>Collectio Avellana</i>
<i>CFHB</i>	<i>Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae</i>
Corippus	Corippus, <i>In laudem Iustini Minoris</i> (<i>In Praise of Justin II</i>)
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i>
<i>CSHB</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae</i>
<i>CP</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>CTh.</i>	<i>Codex Theodosianus</i> (<i>Theodosian Code</i>)
<i>de Caer.</i>	Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, <i>De Caerimoniis</i> (<i>On Ceremonies</i>)
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>Ep(p).</i>	<i>Epistula(e)</i> (or Letter(s))
<i>EH</i>	<i>Ecclesiastical History / Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
<i>GA</i>	<i>Greek Anthology / Anthologia Graeca</i>
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>GRW</i>	<i>Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare</i>
<i>Hom.</i>	<i>Homily</i>

<i>IGR</i>	<i>Ius Graeco-Romanum</i> (Greek-Roman Law)
<i>Il.</i>	Homer, <i>Iliad</i>
<i>JEd</i>	<i>Justiniani Edicta</i> (Edicts of Justinian)
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JIN</i>	<i>Justini Minoris Novellae Constitutiones</i> (Novels of Justin II)
<i>JInst.</i>	<i>Justiniani Instituta</i> (Institutes)
<i>JÖB</i>	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>Just. Nov.</i>	<i>Justiniani Novellae Constitutiones</i> (New Laws / Novels of Justinian)
<i>LSJ</i>	Liddell & Scott, <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i> (9th edn)
<i>Mal.</i>	John Malalas, <i>Chronicle</i>
<i>Mansi</i>	<i>Sacrorum Consiliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio</i> , ed. J. D. Mansi
<i>Met.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i>
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
<i>Nic. Eth.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>
<i>OCD</i>	<i>Oxford Classical Dictionary</i> (3 rd edn)
<i>OCT</i>	Oxford Classical Texts
<i>ODB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</i> (1991 edn)
<i>Or.</i>	<i>Oratio</i> (speech)
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologiae cursus completa, series graeca</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne (<i>Patrologia Graeca</i>)
<i>PGL</i>	<i>A Patristic Greek Lexicon</i>
<i>Phdr.</i>	Plato, <i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologiae cursus completa, series Latina</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne (<i>Patrologia Latina</i>)
<i>PLRE II</i>	<i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> , Vol. II A.D. 395–527
<i>PLRE III</i>	<i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> , Vol. III A.D. 527–641
<i>PS</i>	Syrianus Magister, <i>On Strategy</i> (<i>Peri Strategikes</i>)
<i>r.</i>	reigned
<i>Rep.</i>	<i>Republic</i>
<i>SH</i>	Procopius, <i>Secret History</i> (<i>Anecdota</i>)
<i>Smp.</i>	Plato, <i>Symposium</i>
<i>str.</i>	<i>strophe</i>
<i>s. a.</i>	<i>sub anno</i> (under the year)
<i>SVF</i>	<i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i>
<i>TibN</i>	<i>Novellae Constitutiones Tiberii II</i> (New Laws of Tiberius II), in <i>Ius Graeco-Romanum</i> .
<i>Tim.</i>	Plato, <i>Timaeus</i>
<i>TLG</i>	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Graecae</i>
<i>TTH</i>	Translated Texts for Historians, Liverpool University Press
<i>Veg.</i>	Vegetius, <i>Epitome of Military Science</i>
<i>Wars</i>	Procopius, <i>Wars</i>

INTRODUCTION

1. THE WORLD OF AGAPETUS, THE *DIALOGUE ON POLITICAL SCIENCE* AND PAUL THE SILENTIARY

The authors presented in this book were deeply concerned with the politics of the sixth century of our era.¹ The first, the cleric Agapetus, offered 72 artfully drafted, occasionally radical aphorisms, at least ostensibly to help the new emperor, Justinian, succeed – even survive – in the difficult period following his accession in 527. The second, the anonymous author of the *Dialogue on Political Science*, drew heavily, in what survives of his treatise, on the Platonic tradition of the philosopher-ruler; on later Greek theorising which, like Agapetus, saw the emperor as the ‘imitation of God’; and integrated this with ideas from Roman political philosophy concerned with the nature of an ideal republic, especially those of Cicero. He did so in order to model an ideal state, one implicitly critical of Justinian’s rule, though not of the imperial institution, which broadly favoured the interests of the senatorial aristocracy. The third, by contrast, the courtier Paul the Silentary, exploited the re-dedication (over the Christmas period of 562/3) of the magnificent church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, following the repair of damage caused by an earthquake, to spin a panegyric of the emperor towards the disturbed, crisis-prone end of his reign.

All three were steeped in literary traditions and rhetorical conventions whose sources lay in remote classical antiquity, both Greek and Roman, and whose mastery, via a laborious and expensive education, served to mark out the social and political elites of their society. They also wrote in a Greek remote from that spoken on the streets of Constantinople and which went back a thousand years to classical Athens and beyond. Their way of expressing their ideas is not ours. But we must not, on that account, discount the seriousness with which they moulded ancient models and genres to address issues of great contemporary salience.

1 All dates here and in the remainder of this book are CE unless otherwise indicated.

2 THREE POLITICAL VOICES FROM THE AGE OF JUSTINIAN

In fact, all three writers are not only of intrinsic interest, but, from their differing perspectives, they cast great, often still unappreciated, light on the political and intellectual culture of the sixth century – above all, on the reign of Justinian I (r. 527–65) – in what some call the early Byzantine, others the late Roman Empire. After China, this was the largest, most populous, richest and most sophisticated polity on the planet.² The Western Roman Empire had, after a period of retrenchment and withdrawal, evaporated in the previous century; the last Western emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed by the Ostrogoth Odavacar in 476 and, with him, imperial authority finally disappeared over the western Mediterranean, Gaul and Britain. But the Eastern Empire, ruled from ‘New’ Rome (or Constantinople – now Istanbul), had retained the Balkans, Asia Minor (modern Turkey), Syria and Palestine, as well as Egypt and Libya. It was also the home of most of the cities and, apart from Rome, of the greatest and richest of those that had once made up the undivided empire.

But this society was not at peace with itself. It was far from the just and stable polity, ‘moved by all the notes of a harmonious symphony’, to which the author of the *Dialogue* aspired (5.136). Internally, it set landlords against their tenants and workforces, many little better than slaves, who may have comprised anything up to 80–90% of the population of its pre-industrial agricultural economy. Cities were often pitted against their rural hinterlands. ‘Banditry’ and general lawlessness were also reducing large, especially rural, areas of the empire to near anarchy.³ The elite were also divided amongst themselves in Constantinople and elsewhere; this reflected bitter resentments on the part of the older aristocracy against relative upstarts such as Justin I (r. 518–27), his nephew, Justinian, and their close associates.

At the same time, the imperial government promoted the persecution of (Christian) heretics, ‘Hellenes’ (that is, Pagans, of whom far more remained at all levels of society throughout the empire than contemporary Christian writers cared to admit), Manichaeans, and other ‘deviants’, including gay

2 For the best overview of all aspects of the C6 empire, see *The Age of Justinian*, ed. M. Maas (2005). *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. XIV, eds. Averil Cameron, B. Ward-Perkins and Michael Whitby (Cambridge, 2000) is also invaluable for the period 425–600. *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire*, ed. J. Shepard (2008), also contains useful material, esp. ch. 1 on Justinian. For the socio-economic structure of the entire Mediterranean, by region, at this period, see C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400–800* (2005). For the intellectual culture of the C6, Maas (1992) remains enlightening; even more so, Averil Cameron (1979; 1985, esp. ch. 11; 1991) and Liebeschuetz (2001).

3 The French Byzantinist, M. Kaplan (1992), 173, wrote of ‘l’anarchie justinienne’.

men. Meanwhile, the supporters of the rival chariot-racing and theatrical factions fought on the streets of the capital (and other cities); the worst of these outbreaks, the Nika riot of 532, nearly cost Justinian his throne and left up to 25,000 dead in a wrecked city. Violent disturbances, again often involving the factions, also featured in the troubled last years of Justinian's reign.⁴ The churches were bitterly, sometimes violently split over the nature(s) of Christ, which in this society had wider political consequences. Neither intensive imperial diplomacy nor coercion could reconcile them.

Even within the majority 'Catholic/Orthodox' camp, which subscribed to the doctrinal formulae proclaimed at the ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451,⁵ relations between the emperor and patriarch in Constantinople and the pope in Rome were often strained.⁶ In 545, for instance, the emperor appears to have kidnapped the pope, Vigilius, and brought him to Constantinople to 'encourage' him to subscribe to imperial ecclesiastical policies. Such wide-ranging tensions and resentments were exacerbated by the remorseless taxation of a relatively primitive pre-industrial economy to fund the emperor's expensive, spectacular, politically motivated and empire-wide building and charitable programmes,⁷ and, no less important, almost continuous war.⁸ Book 4 of the *Dialogue*, devoted to military matters, and Paul's repeated references to Justinian's conquests, in his *Description* of Hagia Sophia, remind us of this.

Protracted wars persisted for nearly all of Justinian's reign: in Italy, North Africa and, later, in southern Spain in the west; in the Balkans; and with the Persians in the east. Some, notably the reconquest of North Africa and Italy, were remarkably successful in the short term, although the Roman hold on Italy, not finally subdued until 561, began to disintegrate once Justinian died.

4 For factional riots, see e.g. Procopius, *Wars* 1.24ff., *SH* 7, in the Loeb edition; Mal., *Chronicle* 474–77, 484, 490–92, 496, in Jeffrey's translation – the figures refer to pages in ed. Dindorf (1831) on which her translation is based; *Chronicon Paschale* 112ff., in the TTH edition; and Theophanes, *AM* 6024, ed. Mango and Scott. See *Dialogue* 5.103, with n. 91, for further details.

5 Modern Kadıköy, across the Bosphorus from Constantinople. The most famous (and subsequently controversial) doctrine affirmed was that Christ had two natures (*physeis*), albeit concurring in one person (*prosopon*) and one *hypostasis* (or subject). For details, see *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (2005). Here, as later, references are normally to the translations cited in the Select Bibliography.

6 For East–West relations, see Sotinel (2005).

7 For charitable works, see e.g. *Bldgs.*, *passim*; Paul, *Description of Hagia Sophia* below, and his *Description of the Ambo* in Mango (1986), 91–96.

8 For major internal conflicts, see Bell (forthcoming).

4 THREE POLITICAL VOICES FROM THE AGE OF JUSTINIAN

Worse, the empire suffered not only the first ruinous pandemic of, probably, bubonic plague in European history with outbreaks from 542–70, but also from numerous other major environmental catastrophes – including disastrous earthquakes (some 250,000 are reported to have died, for instance, in Antioch in 524),⁹ floods and locusts.¹⁰ Although the archaeological record suggests widespread economic prosperity till the mid-sixth century, much of the population remained vulnerable to famine and more general hardship, in ways not so far different from some contemporary developing countries in Africa or Asia.¹¹ Even allowing for the exaggeration to which rhetorically trained writers were prone, the situation could be grim, especially for the lower classes.

It is against this turbulent background that we must view the near completion, during the century under discussion, of a process that had gathered momentum from the accession of Diocletian in 284, if not earlier. In this, the empire had effectively transformed from a relatively lightly administered aggregate of quasi-autonomous cities to an ever-more centralised autocracy which, from the conversion of the emperor Constantine (r. 306–37), was also increasingly and intolerantly Christian. This was focused on the person of the emperor and centred on the ever-more splendid new imperial capital, Constantinople, to whose ornament Justinian devoted such high priority and immense resources.¹² It dominated a society whose artistic and intellectual vitality would not be surpassed over the nearly one thousand years of the empire's remaining life until the city fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453.

If what we now think of as 'Byzantium' had not arrived by the reign of Justinian, it was nearly there; the process would be completed in the next century when the loss of all the imperial territories in the Middle East and North Africa to the Muslim Arabs, combined with Slav inroads

9 For the plague, *Wars* 2.22–23, John of Ephesus (in Ps. Dionysius of Tel Mahre, *Chronicle*, 73–98, 102, 107); Evagrius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.29; and Mal., *Chronicle* 482. Also Horden (2005) on the plague, with more detail in Little (2007). Mal., *Chronicle* 418, for earthquake deaths in Antioch in 524.

10 There is a lengthy, though still incomplete, list of such calamities from 500–65 in Meier (2003), 656–70 (in German).

11 For the horrific famines in the Edessa area (modern Urfa) of south-east Turkey around 500, following plagues of locusts, see Ps. Joshua the Stylite, *Chronicle* 253, in TTH edition. For poverty and famine more generally, including the vulnerability of large sections of the population, both urban and rural, see Patlagean (1977) (in French); Brown (1992; 2002).

12 For Constantinople, rebuilt by Justinian, as the setting for 'political theatre' on the grand scale, see Maas and Croke (both 2005). On autocracy, see the suggestive comparison between Justinian and Stalin in Honoré (1978), 28–30.

in the Balkans, forced still more radical re-organisation and centralisation. It was also accompanied by financial impoverishment, the near-extinction of classical culture as a living force and its replacement by an imperial, Christian culture as the exclusive basis of social and political cohesion.¹³ Yet when people think of the achievements of this empire, they often have in mind the period before this metamorphosis was complete: that of the ‘Great Church’ of Hagia Sophia, the mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna, or the Justinianic reform and codification of Roman law (the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*) – all products of this one century, and largely the inspiration of one emperor, Justinian.

This turbulence was reflected on the ideological level: the intellectual scene was diverse. It now also included literary genres that had only emerged with the rise of Christianity, such as chronicles, ecclesiastical history, hymnography, homiletics or theology, in the last of which the emperor personally claimed expertise. Literatures also developed in Syria and Egypt in Syriac and Coptic respectively, while Latin literature was widely available and read at least in Constantinople.¹⁴ The older, classical genres still clung on as well: all three of our texts, for example, belong to ancient traditions, echoing writers such as Homer and Plato, who lived a thousand and more years earlier, as well as more recent ones, both Greek and Roman.

In this rapidly evolving culture, the emperor himself was not immune to criticism: the last major historian of antiquity, Procopius, savagely indicted Justinian and his wife – although the author of the *Dialogue* was also critical of the regime, if more temperately and obliquely. Agapetus, and above all Paul, on the other hand were actively supportive. The civil servant and intellectual John the Lydian prudently confined his criticisms of the regime to Justinian’s officials, about whose wrongdoing the pious emperor, whom he praises, allegedly knew nothing.¹⁵ Such tact was a necessity in a state where, for example, Procopius lamented that frankness could be, literally, fatal, or where a prominent bishop, John of Ephesus, boasted of the many ‘famous persons’ he had had tortured for suspected religious deviance.¹⁶ But if the hostility is not always apparent in our evidence, it still seethed below the surface.

13 For the C6 cultural transformation under the influence of Christianity, see Averil Cameron (1979; 1991) and Liebeschuetz (2001), esp. ch. 10.

14 For the availability of Latin literature, see Mazzucchi (1978), Averil Cameron (2009).

15 Procopius, esp. in *SH*; John the Lydian, *On Magistracies* 3.55ff.

16 *SH* 1.1; John of Ephesus (in Ps. Dionysius of Tel Mahre, *Chronicle*, 77–78). See Kaldellis (2004), 164–73, for such prudent dissimulation and its potential for misinterpretation today.

6 THREE POLITICAL VOICES FROM THE AGE OF JUSTINIAN

It was at least partly in response to such alienation, as well as to potential and actual challenges from within the elite,¹⁷ from hostile churchmen or the factions, that Justinian applied, with great determination and considerable success, policies adopted since the first Christian emperor, Constantine, to display, promote and, crucially, *legitimise* his vulnerable regime.¹⁸ This meant, given prevailing values, projecting himself as an exemplary Christian monarch, and exploiting and taking further all the rhetorical and artistic techniques employed, even by Pagan predecessors, for this same end. This was, the regime maintained, shown above all by military conquests attributed to God's support and his own ostentatious zeal, so that Justinian's early successes in North Africa featured heavily (along with his charitable works and personal devotions) in his propaganda throughout his life – even featuring on his pall;¹⁹ in his law reform project, also achieved, he claimed, with God's help;²⁰ and in his massive building programme. This was by no means confined to the capital; sites of religious significance, such as Jerusalem or Ephesus (where Mary, Jesus' mother, had allegedly died) were amongst other spectacular beneficiaries.²¹ It was also demonstrated in propagandist literature, of which Paul the Silentiary provides a magnificent example. There was also the ceaseless search, already noted, for church unity – under imperial hegemony – and the extirpation of 'heresy', which all had a fiercely political as well as a religious dimension. The aim was to eradicate 'error' and possible political alienation; but also, more positively,

17 For senators trying to exploit the Nika riot (532), see *Wars* 1.25, with Kaldellis (2004), 123–24.

18 This does not mean that pre-Christian emperors neglected their PR. It was, for instance, a major preoccupation of the first emperor Augustus (r. 26 BCE–14 CE), who set a precedent his successors followed: see e.g. Millar and Segal (1984), and Augustus' own *Res Gestae* (*The Achievements of the Divine Augustus*), ed. with trans., Brunt and Moore (1967). This emphasises such themes as military success, piety, lavish building works (esp. of temples) and charitable expenditures, in terms not so different from Paul's panegyric on Justinian, albeit in sober prose.

19 Corippus, 1.274.

20 E.g. *C. Tanta*, *C. Deo Auctore*. In general, the preambles to these and the other imperial constitutions (= laws) introducing the constituent parts of the *Corpus of Civil Law* (529–33), i.e. the *Code*, *Digest* and *Institutes*, and those to Justinian's *Novels* (= his later legislation) provide full accounts both of how the emperor wanted his achievements (and policies) to be seen and of his own status as, in effect, God's vicegerent: on which, see Dvornik (1966), 716–23. (By long tradition, the introductory constitutions of the parts of the *CIC* are referred to simply by *C.* [= *Constitutio*], followed by the first word, or two, in Latin, of the law in question. In isolation, they make little sense, and should not be translated.)

21 *Bldgs.* gives details, including of important military works also. On this work, see the useful collection of articles in *AT* (2000) and also below.

as we might conceptualise it, to generate a shared sense of Roman imperial identity. This project remained, however, unfulfilled – notwithstanding Procopius’ propagandist claim in the 550s that the emperor had eradicated religious deviation, and ‘brought it about that it [*sc.* the empire] stood on the firm foundation of a single faith’.²²

Christian emperors, unlike their Pagan predecessors, could not lay claim to divinity. But they could seek, so far as possible for a mortal, to assimilate themselves to divinity and project themselves as God’s vicegerents on earth. Thus we see Justinian and his wife portrayed as leading mankind, under Christ, in the apse mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna. The same pair intercedes on behalf of mankind to end the sufferings visited on earth by a wrathful God in Romanos’ *kontakion* (or hymn), *On Fires and Earthquakes*, while the same hymnodist exploits another *kontakion*, *The Entry into Jerusalem*, to set out his vision of the imperial office.²³ For his immediate successor, Justin II (r. 565–78), the emperor could be described, without any sense of blasphemy, as the ‘image of the Omnipotent’ – a Latin phrase (*omnipotentis imago*)²⁴ that echoes the ideology of empire fundamental to the *Dialogue*, to Agapetus, and also implicit in Paul. Paul may even be thought to have upgraded the emperor, since God has now become his ‘colleague’ or ‘co-worker’ (*sunergon*, line 6)! With similar ‘divinising’ intent, the throne of Justin II was placed in the imperial palace under a mosaic of Christ (*de Caer.* 2.52.705, ed. Reiske). Not least, perhaps, we hear in Paul the Silentiary’s poem on the re-dedication of Hagia Sophia that this event, in this greatest of all churches, on this greatest of all days – so Paul writes in his opening lines – was one in which both ‘God and the emperor are honoured’.²⁵ We soon also learn that his late empress, Theodora, who in her lifetime served as her spouse’s earthly helpmeet in Agapetus (ch. 72), now acts as a heavenly intercessor for Justinian with God (61). She plays here the role more normally associated with Mary (or a saint). Although characterised by his enemies as a monstrous hypocrite, even his most hostile surviving critic had to concede the emperor’s ostentatious piety and personal austerity.²⁶

In the capital especially, there were the spectacular and constantly evolving imperial ceremonials – at court, in church, in the hippodrome or

22 *Bldgs.* 1.1 – itself a species of panegyric. See pp. 92ff. below.

23 See Topping (1977; 1978) for an analysis of both *kontakia*.

24 Corippus, 2.427–28.

25 Paul, *Description* (or *Ekthesis*) of Hagia Sophia 1. My italics.

26 *SH* 1.3.

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on the streets of Constantinople – which tended increasingly to integrate the sacred and the secular.²⁷ Against this background, both Agapetus and the author of the *Dialogue* had no difficulty in representing the emperor as the ‘imitation of God’, with the former offering a politically charged recipe for successful imitation. Agapetus saw the emperor’s role as the ‘imitation’ of God as bestowed on him by the Deity (ch. 1); the author of the *Dialogue*, as befitted a Neoplatonist philosopher from (probably) the highest social strata, offered a more philosophically nuanced approach, set far more clearly in a legal-administrative framework based on the perceived justice and legitimacy of the imperial institution. This showed how an emperor trained in ‘political science’ might achieve the same objective by imitation of the divine through ‘ascent’ to the intellectual world ‘above’, and his return to our own below with the necessary equipment to rule well (*D.* 5.116–17) – and, by implication, to do so better than Justinian.

In this, both writers were continuing, as Section 3 below explains, a tradition dating from Constantine’s bishop, Eusebius. He had re-formulated, in Christian terms, the concept of the emperor as God’s likeness on earth. This concept had a long history in Pagan antiquity; it reached back to the great monarchies of the Hellenistic period in the third century BCE.²⁸ But it is hard not to see such a metaphor of the emperor as the ‘imitation of God’ and his vicegerent on earth (on which more below) as in some sense equating the emperor to Christ.

2. THE AUTHORS

(i) Agapetus

The traditional view that someone named Agapetus was the author of the sixth-century text addressed to the emperor Justinian I is undoubtedly right. The manuscript tradition, in Greek, goes back to the thirteenth century; in Slavonic, via translations, to the eleventh century; while citations are to be found in earlier Byzantine literature.²⁹ The addressee is certainly Justinian I, not Justinian II (r. 685–95, 705–11). Read with chapter 34, chapter 17 kills any suggestion that the latter was the dedicatee of Agapetus’ work: both chapters represent the emperor as having established his credentials for the

²⁷ See n. 12 above.

²⁸ Eusebius, *Tricennial Orations*, and *Life of Constantine*. See Plato, *Theaetetus* 176b, for the concept of assimilation to the divine in Platonic (and Neoplatonic) thinking.

²⁹ Barker (1957), Ševčenko (1954; 1982).

throne *before* his accession. Justinian II, in contrast, was born to the purple, and crowned in 685, aged only 16 (or 14).³⁰

But who exactly was Agapetus? Not the pope of that name, nor the Western consul for 517.³¹ Exhaustive searches since the sixteenth century of all known sixth-century bearers of the name have, so far, yielded no definite conclusions; the tradition, which might be true, that he was a deacon of Hagia Sophia depends on a reference in only one branch of the MS tradition.³² The tradition that he was Justinian's teacher seems merely a fanciful inference from his having addressed a book of advice to that emperor. He *may* also have been associated in some way with the so-called *Akoimeto*;³³ since his short text apparently contains 204 references to the letters of the fourth-century saint and writer, Isidore of Pelusium, and the library of their monastery in Constantinople seems to have held a collection of some 2,000 such letters.³⁴ However, we can be certain he was a deacon called Agapetus: the acrostic, hardly a later hoax, made up of the initial Greek letters of his 72 chapters spells out the author's name: *Agapetos ... diakonos* ('Agapetus ... deacon').

(ii) *The Dialogue*

The authorship of the *Dialogue* is more obscure. The surviving ninth-/tenth-century Greek text was first discovered in the Vatican library by Cardinal Mai, the librarian, as a palimpsest (or reused MS) of very poor quality, in which a work of the second-century CE intellectual Aristides had been written over our text.³⁵ This discovery comprised around a book and a half of a sixth-century political dialogue recalling Plato's *Republic*. (A further fragment was discovered in 1973.)³⁶ Mai published it in 1827, along with other important finds, including much of the lost text of Cicero's *Republic*, while expressing the (sadly unfulfilled) hope that he would eventually be

30 Ševčenko (1982).

31 *PLRE II* s.v. 'Fl. Agapitus 3'.

32 Bellomo (1906), 40–44 (in Italian). Over 100 MSS survive, testifying to the work's geographically widespread popularity, then and in later printed texts. See below and Ševčenko (1954; 1982).

33 Literally, the 'Sleepless Ones' – monks whose liturgy was organised to provide continuous services 24 hours a day, with three choirs serving in successive 8-hour shifts.

34 Frohne (1985), 199–208, 245–46, 251 (in German).

35 A photograph of part of this MS, included as a frontispiece to Mazzuchi's editions of both 1982 and 2002, shows how illegible even a relatively well-preserved portion of this text is.

36 On which see Behr (1974).

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able to produce a better edition.³⁷ Mai attributed its authorship to one Peter the Patrician (c.500–65), a distinguished high official, diplomat, lawyer and historian belonging to exactly the right period.³⁸ He surmised that our text was part of a work of Peter's referred to in the *Suda* (a Byzantine lexicon of around 1000) as *On Political Institutions*, of which extracts survive.³⁹ This identification is no longer generally accepted, not least because Peter was apparently writing about political *institutions*, whereas our *Dialogue* is concerned with political *philosophy*. Moreover, extracts from Peter 'differ so much in kind from our text that identification can hardly be regarded as even probable'. Mazzuchi, the only editor of the Greek text since Mai, concurs.⁴⁰ It is even less likely that anyone who held the very senior appointment of Master of the Offices (*magister officium*), as Peter did for a record 26 years from 539, would have risked voicing the implicit criticisms of the emperor found in our text.

More probable, however, is Mai's identification of the text with that briefly summarised by the scholar, politician and prelate Photius (patriarch of Constantinople 858–67, 877–86) in his *Bibliotheca* – to which he does not assign an author. We should perhaps ascribe this anonymity to the criticisms it contained of Justinian's regime.⁴¹ Of this work, *Codex* (or page) 37 reads:

A work on political science was read which, in a dialogue, introduced two interlocutors, Menas, the patrician, and Thomas, the referendarius. The work contains six books, in which it introduces another form of constitution beyond those spoken of in antiquity. It calls this 'dicaearchic'.⁴² Plato's *Republic* is justly criticised. The constitution which they say should be introduced must be constructed out of the three forms: the imperial,⁴³ the aristocratic, and the democratic. It will combine the purity of each constitution and thereby create the truly best constitution.⁴⁴

37 *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio e Vaticanis codicibus edita ab Angelo Maio II* (Rome, 1827), 590–699.

38 See *ODB* vol. 3, under 'Peter Patrikios'.

39 In the *On Ceremonies (de Caerimoniis)*, 1.84–95, of the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (r. 945–59).

40 Peter's title is *Peri politikēs katastaseōs* (*On Political Institutions*), in contrast to our *Peri politikēs epistēmēs* (*On Political Science*). Quotation from Averil Cameron (1985), 251; see also Cameron (2009); Mazzucchi (1978; 2002), xv (in Italian and Latin respectively); Behr (1974); Mazzucchi and Matelli (1985) (in Italian).

41 Wilson (1994), for a part-translation of the *Bibliotheca*, with introduction and notes.

42 For the meaning of this, see p. 64 below.

43 Or 'royal'. See p. 50 below.

44 My translation of Photius' text (ed. Henry [Paris, 1959]). This is reproduced by Mazzucchi (2002) on an unnumbered page, preceding his p. 1.

Since only one and a half books of the *Dialogue* survive, we cannot judge securely whether Photius' work is identical with ours. If Photius generally worked from memory, as his most recent translator and editor, Nigel Wilson, believes, then it is even less likely that we shall reach firm conclusions; Photius may well be recalling only what he found memorable, as well as making the occasional slip.⁴⁵ Moreover Photius does not mention all the topics covered in our text – nothing on military matters (Book 4), for example. The Platonic style of the *Dialogue* is also ignored, although there is some (mild) criticism of Plato both overt and implicit: for our author, the ruling elite are not to live communally but with households of their own (5.32); their wives are only to be concerned with matters concerning women of the lower classes (5.78). Also, although in the surviving text the concept of a 'mixed constitution' is not spelt out in terms and the word 'dicaearchon' nowhere appears, there is a strong hint of a tripartite constitution in our author's assignment of complementary roles to the 'optimates'⁴⁶ and the other, lower classes of the state in his selection procedure for an emperor (5.50–52), about which more will be said below. On balance, it is probably safe, with Cameron, Fotiou or Mazzuchi, to take the identity of our *Dialogue* and Photius' anonymous dialogue as our working assumption.

Assuming that Mai correctly identified Photius' 'Menas' as an abbreviated, or misremembered, form of the 'Menodorus' used in the *Dialogue*, then he was probably referring to the Menas who had been Urban Prefect, responsible for the administration of the capital.⁴⁷ He was later to be Praetorian Prefect of the East in 528–29, and enjoyed the rank of patrician,⁴⁸ in which

45 See Wilson (rev. ed. 1996), 95–99, for Photius' methods of composition. For a counter-example, showing that Photius could also work with a text in front of him, in this case, of Josephus, see Maas (1990).

46 'Optimates' translates the *Dialogue's* *aristoi*, literally the 'best people'; Paul also addresses his audience of the 'great and good' of the capital in his *Description of the Ambo* of Hagia Sophia (line 3) as *aristoi*. But to talk of the 'best people' in English sounds prissy; to talk of 'senators' gives a specific institutional interpretation of the term, which could mislead. Hence my preference for the more neutral 'optimates'. This is a Latin term corresponding to the Greek *aristoi*. It has some currency (in English, following Cicero's usage) as a designation of the upper classes – in effect, the most prominent senators – in discussions of politics in the late Roman Republic. But it is also used to designate the 'best people' ruling the state by late C5/6 (West) Roman Neoplatonic philosopher and statesman, Boethius (*Institutions of Arithmetic* 2.45), writing in Latin, while cf. Machiavelli's usage of *ottimati* and its near synonym *grandi* for the same 'top people' in his *Discourses*.

47 *PRLE* II s.v. 'Menas 5'.

48 The ancient rank of 'patrician' (*patricius*) had been revived by Constantine (r. 306–37). It was awarded on a very select basis by him (and his successors) to his closest friends and

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capacity he is flatteringly addressed in the imperial constitution confirming the new Justinianic *Code* (529).⁴⁹ Such was his eminence, and one presumes respectability, that he even escorted the empress Theodora to the hot springs of Pythia (in Bithynia). He may also be the subject of a recently discovered short elegiac poem, extolling a 'Menas' as a great legislator and rhetorician of philosophical bent who 'outshone Pericles by as much ... as Plato did Anaxagoras ... Let jealousy of his discourses and laws depart.'⁵⁰

No *referendarius* named Thomas is, however, known.⁵¹ But a *quaestor* (effectively, legal secretary or minister to the emperor) of that name (and an ex-consul) is cited in another imperial constitution, establishing the Justinianic *Code*,⁵² as one of those responsible for this achievement. He was also, allegedly, a victim of a purge of eminent Pagans in the same year, 529. But whether or not this is true – the relevant passage in Malalas' *Chronicle* is an abridgement – he was apparently dead by 535, when there is a reference to Thomas of 'the most glorious memory' in a *Novel* of Justinian. This suggests rehabilitation, if Thomas had indeed been killed in 529.⁵³

We cannot be absolutely certain about Photius' identification of the participants in our *Dialogue*. Even Mazzucchi, who formerly speculated that Menas was the author, now goes no further than suggesting that, if Menas was still alive at the time of publication, he did not object to the book.⁵⁴ But

the highest officials. Patricians ranked after consuls and ex-consuls in the senatorial hierarchy: Jones (1964), 106, 254.

49 C. *Summa*, *Introduction* (529). Text in Mazzucchi (2002), xiii.

50 My translation. Rashed (2000), 89–98 (in French). See also Mazzucchi (2002), xvi, for Greek text and discussion (in Latin). Mazzucchi is unconvinced by Rashed's suggestion that the *Dialogue* was the inspiration of the (first?) Arabic work of political philosophy, al Farabi's *Principles of the Views of the Citizens of the Best State*, possibly written in Aleppo in the mid-C10. But O'Meara (2003), ch. 14, detects a strong Neoplatonic influence, as well as a good knowledge of Plato in the *Principles*; he sees the work as having deep correspondences both to the *Dialogue* and to the C6 theological writings of Ps. Dionysius the Areopagite.

51 Referendaries (*referendarii*) served as the emperor's judicial clerks and messengers. Their number rose to fourteen, only to be cut back to eight by Justinian (*Just. Nov.* 10, 535). As officials close to the emperor (and empress), they were men of considerable standing: one, Theodorus, was put in charge, for instance, of emergency measures in the capital during the great plague in 542. For details of the office, see Jones (1964), 575, with sources at 1236.

52 C. *Haec* 1 (529).

53 Mal., *Chronicle* 449, for his execution; *Just. Nov.* 35, for mention in legislation. Also *PLRE* IIIb s.v. 'Thomas 3'.

54 Mazzucchi 1982, and 2002, xvi. Mazzucchi and Matelli (1985) argued for east Mediterranean links for the author, relying in part on the use of the dialogue form, only found elsewhere in the C6 in Gaza, then a flourishing metropolis, but also on the continuing existence of a school of philosophy in Alexandria that included Christians as well as Pagans.

the identification is probable – even if using modified names would represent a departure from the practice of Plato and Cicero, to whom our author is heavily indebted:⁵⁵ both these two writers employed the actual names of the real people purportedly speaking in their dialogues. Possibly also, if Photius was writing from memory, his referring to Thomas as a *referendarius* was a slip for *quaestor*, especially as both functionaries were active in the legal area. Perhaps too, our author did not want to make as his spokesman someone who had fallen spectacularly from grace in 529, whether rehabilitated or not. But, speculation aside, we certainly have as our two actors, members – real or imaginary – of the highest administrative levels in the empire, whose exalted social position and probable wealth, like that of Paul the Silentiary (on whom more below), contrast with that of Agapetus, a ‘mere’ deacon.

True, a deacon attached to major churches could receive a comfortable income, even before offerings are taken into account, of up to 100 gold *nomismata* / *solidi* a year in exceptional cases, although less in poorer rural churches. This compared most favourably with what, say, an unskilled labourer in full employment might hope to earn in sixth-century Constantinople: one *solidus* a month. But that is nothing to what a senior official might receive by way of salary, fees and, indeed, bribes: at the apex, the Praetorian Prefect of Africa received 7,200 *solidi* (= 1000 lbs of gold) annually, the governor of Egypt received some 2,880 *solidi*; even the civil servant and antiquarian John the Lydian received, admittedly in an exceptional first year as a civil servant in the sixth-century Praetorian Prefecture in Constantinople, 1000 *solidi*, including fee income.⁵⁶

We must not forget the relative wealth and importance of the actors in the *Dialogue* (and presumably of its author and his intended audience) and of Agapetus when we examine the differing social attitudes reflected in their political recommendations: for example, the great responsibilities reserved for the optimates in the *Dialogue*, and by contrast not simply Agapetus’ concern for the poor, a standard feature of Christian discourse, but his apparent enthusiasm for what we might conceptualise as ‘progressive taxation’ (ch. 16): not just giving to the poor, but taking from the rich.

55 See the *Summary* introducing *Dialogue* Book 5, p. 144 below (which must not be confused with my own *Synopsis* preceding Book 5), as well as the persistent echoes, duly annotated, of both writers in the *Dialogue*. See also p. 50 below.

56 The gold *solidus* (Latin) / *nomisma* (Greek) was the standard and remarkably stable currency of late antiquity at the rate of 72 to the pound (of gold). See Jones (1964), 906ff. for deacons’ earnings; 396ff. for official salaries. More generally, Banaji (2nd ed. 2007), App. 1; Mango (1980), 40; Laiou (2002), ch. 39, Table 18; John the Lydian, *On Magistracies* 3.26–27.

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(iii) Paul the Silentiary

Happily, Paul's identity is clear. The contemporary historian and poet Agathias was apparently a (younger?) friend who admired him, and included Paul's poetry in his own *Cycle* of epigrams.⁵⁷ He also describes Paul, in his *History*, as coming from a rich and famous family, with a father, Cyrus, also mentioned in the manuscript heading preceding line 135 of Paul's *Description of Hagia Sophia*, and a grandfather, Florus. Much further than that we cannot go. It is unsurprising that he became a silentiary – a member of a notionally army corps comprising, in the sixth century, 30 court attendants of, it seems, rich backgrounds, organised under three officers (or *decurions*). Their first responsibility was to secure order and silence in the imperial palace – ceremonial functions of the kind one associates with Gentlemen-in-Waiting at the modern British court. But they were also entrusted with important special commissions, especially in church matters. By the sixth century, silentiaries had also achieved the exalted social rank of *illustris*, the highest title of senators in the late empire. The prestige of the post is shown by the elevation to the throne in 491 of one of their decurions, Anastasius; Paul himself may have reached the first position in the corps (*primicerius*). He was, therefore, someone from the same high social stratum as the probable interlocutors and author of the *Dialogue*.⁵⁸ It is unsurprising that, with this background and his talent and commitment to literature, he should have produced the greatest surviving verse panegyric of the age in the introduction to his description of Hagia Sophia on its re-dedication in 562/3. Its prologue provides, apart from imperial legislation, the clearest insight into the imperial ideology of our period, in addition to the wider value of the poem in describing the building, both here and in his supplementary *Description* of the ambo of Hagia Sophia.⁵⁹

As for Paul's other poems, some 80 epigrams are now preserved in the *Greek Anthology*.⁶⁰ Although his subject matter is wide-ranging, much

57 Alan Cameron and Averil Cameron (1966), 17–19; McCail (1969), 94. Also *PLRE* IIIA, *PLRE* IIIB under 'Cyrus 4', 'Florus 1' and 'Paulus 21', respectively.

58 Agathias, *Histories* 5.7ff.; see Jones (1964), 571–72, for details of the office of silentiary, with full sources.

59 *Ambo*: a platform or quasi-pulpit, often on columns, which stood in the nave, between the chancel barrier and the west wall. It served, in Hagia Sophia as elsewhere, as a focal point for the liturgy: where it began and ended, where scripture was read, and where other ritual acts were performed. See under 'ambo' in *ODB*.

60 The collective title of two collections of ancient and Byzantine epigrams, the *Anthologia Palatina* and the *Anthologia Planudea*, usually dated to the C10 and early C14 respectively.

is explicitly erotic and uses Pagan imagery in a society where Paganism was not only far from extinct but actively persecuted by the regime. The following gives some flavour of his work:

I hold her breasts in my hands. We're mouth to mouth. Around her silver neck, I'm in a feeding frenzy. But I've not yet made my foam-born one: I still labour, hugging a girl who refuses me her bed. Half of herself she's given to the Paphian, half to Athene. And I'm ground down between the two.⁶¹

If Paul's poems in this vein alone survived, one might well conclude – more confidently now than formerly – that the author was a Pagan, notwithstanding the range of styles and themes, from the high classical to the demotic, available to writers of this period, or the fact that classical (Pagan) culture was for many laymen the only literary culture they had to read or create in – one moreover which had been drilled into them through years of instruction.⁶² But he also wrote the two *ekphraseis* – both firmly as ecclesiastically and politically 'on message' as one would expect from a senior courtier, familiar with the traditions of imperial panegyric. This is despite their classical language, 'Hellenic' imagery and massive debts of substance,

Paul's *oeuvre* is mainly found in Bk 5 of the *Anth. Pal.*: see Loeb edition of the *GA*, trans. W. Paton (1916–18). Beckby's edition of the *Anthologia Graeca* (= *GA*) (1965) usefully lists all epigrams by author in his final index. All his epigrams are also to be found, with an Italian translation, in ed. Viansino (1963).

61 *GA* 5.272 (my translation). 'Foam-born' translates *Aphrogeneia* – a pun on the name of the foam-born goddess of love, Aphrodite, whose name literally means 'foam-given'. Her aquatic birth is captured in Botticelli's painting, *The Birth of Venus*. 'Paphian' alludes to the goddess's famous cult centre at Paphos in Cyprus. Athene, normally thought of as the goddess of wisdom, was also the eternal virgin, *parthenos* in Greek, after whom the Parthenon in Athens is named.

62 'More confident than formerly' because, until a major article by A. Kaldellis (1999), one could have argued that if Agathias, seemingly universally regarded until recently as a Christian, could write of a 'three-in-a-bed-sex-romp' (*GA* 5.269, trans. in the Loeb edition), as well as anthologising numerous poems with Pagan themes, then so his friend Paul could equally have been a Christian, even if he also wrote on very un-Christian themes. Thanks, however, to Kaldellis, this view of Agathias at least is now less certain; even his three 'Christian' epigrams (*GA* 1.34–36) can be interpreted as an 'insurance policy' against condemnation as a Pagan. For an alternative view, see Averil Cameron (1970), esp. 106–07. See also Jeffreys (2006), 127–40, for an overview of the wide range of literary options available in the C5/C6 centuries; and Alan Cameron (2004), 327–54, arguing, with special reference to Nonnus, that there was no necessary incompatibility in late antiquity between being a Christian and writing on Pagan themes. All this does no more, however, than counsel us against uncritical generalisations, and to examine each case on its merits, while ever mindful of the dangers inherent in writing under a religiously intolerant regime.

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language and technique to such Pagan poets as Homer, Callimachus and Nonnus, whose rigorous metrics Paul scrupulously copied, even outdid. All these leave his personal religious affiliations unclear.⁶³

Paul's personal beliefs are not, however, our primary concern, rather the public message his poem meant to convey. Yet the *prima facie* conflicts of religious outlook exemplified by his work as a whole, as well as by his choice of style and allusion in his *Description*, warn against too readily inferring, in this period certainly, someone's religion from what he wrote under an intolerant regime, especially when that person was, like Paul, a courtier, close to the emperor. This is especially true of a poem written for declamation in the purlieu of a church where the great Christian hymnodist, Romanos, had specifically denounced by name the same 'Hellene', Homer, whom Paul explicitly claims to imitate.⁶⁴ We would do well to remember that under a tyranny or religious or other ideological repression, modern no less than ancient, it is the expressions of unorthodoxy that are more likely to provide truer indications of what a writer really believed than professions of piety, especially on a public platform.⁶⁵ The alternative is to attribute 'religiously incorrect' sentiments and themes to the triumph of the desire of late classicising poets to write in the classical manner over their Christian piety.

Agathias, however, helps clarify matters. He describes Paul, notwithstanding his exalted provenance, as:

chiefly devoted to the study of literature and eloquence and it was on these cultured pursuits that he prided himself most. He is, in fact, the author of very many poems of considerable merit, among which that written on the subject of the Great Church reaches a higher pitch of refinement and erudition than the rest ...⁶⁶

To the extent that Paul saw his panegyric primarily in terms of enhancing his reputation or career by displaying his talents for extreme literary classicism

63 Nonnus had written, in the previous century, an epic in 48 books, the *Dionysiaca*, on the adventures of the Pagan god Dionysius, as well as a verse paraphrase of John's gospel. Liebeschuetz (2001), ch. 10, offers a wide-ranging, accessible starting-point for the historical and cultural background to his work, including on the wider transformation of Greek culture in this period. See also Bowersock (1996), esp. ch 4, on the mutual influence of Christianity and Paganism in late antiquity.

64 Paul, *Description of Hagia Sophia*, 617; Romanos, *On Pentecost* (*Kontakion* 33, str. 17.6).

65 An argument cogently developed in Kaldellis (2004), 165–73.

66 *Histories* 5.7, trans. Frendo (1975).

and imperial promotion on a grander scale than, say, erotic elegiac couplets permitted, the question of his personal convictions becomes less pressing. After all, a contemporary advertising executive or political publicist does not have to believe (although he may) that his client's product, or his candidate, has descended from heaven to save mankind; the essential, for which he will be richly rewarded, is that he must convince his audience or the electorate of this.

3. DATING

Dating texts can be frustrating. Dating two of ours is no exception. Fortunately, because both are more closely related to 'the real world' than one might first assume from their highly stylised manner, addressing the chronological problems has the advantage of casting light on that world and on the substantive issues their authors were addressing.

(i) Paul the Silentiary

Paul happily poses no great problem. His poem was indubitably delivered during the re-dedication ceremonies between 24 December 562 and Epiphany ('Twelfth Night'), 6 January 563, following the reconstruction of the dome that had collapsed during restoration work in 558, after damage in earthquakes the year before. Some scholars, however, are never satisfied and the actual *day* has this time stimulated controversy. There are two candidates: Epiphany and the Sunday after Christmas, which fell that year on 31 December 562. Briefly, the case for the later day reflects the emperor's granting two extensions, by popular request, of the re-dedication ceremonies, suggesting a feast day of the church *after* Christmas (79–80). The feast of Epiphany seems a suitable date: it was a well-established festival, 'on which both God and the emperor were honoured' (2). According to the treatise of the tenth-century emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus' *On Ceremonies*, there were ritual acclamations for the latter as well as a special liturgical celebration in which he took part. This is the date which, since Friedländer's edition (1912), scholars have broadly accepted.⁶⁷

However, in favour of the earlier date, Macrides and Magdalino⁶⁸ have claimed that taking Epiphany as the date of delivery causes textual

⁶⁷ E.g. Mary Whitby (1985a), 215–28.

⁶⁸ Macrides and Magdalino (1988), 63–67.

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awkwardness in the poem, while the prominence given to David, an early Jewish king, in lines 429–37⁶⁹ provides a clue as to the true date of delivery. By the ninth century – and possibly much earlier – the Sunday after Christmas commemorated David, while he was already celebrated as the iconographic type of the king in the sixth-century apse mosaics of St Catherine's monastery in Sinai, founded by Justinian. On this view, to praise David is to praise the current emperor, Justinian. However, as they concede, neither date can be conclusively shown to be the actual date of delivery. And, since they also correctly assert that neither date affects the interpretation of the poem, interested readers can follow up the arguments for themselves.

(ii) Agapetus

A text that advertises itself as advising someone how to be a good ruler is likely to have been produced earlier rather than later in his reign. Beyond that, we cannot go with certainty. (This is true whether or not the work really was primarily meant for Justinian's guidance, or was more of a rhetorical exercise for public display, opinion moulding and securing imperial patronage – not that these objectives are incompatible.) In her doctoral thesis, however, Renate Frohne attempted to go further, essentially by noting how possible references to actual events in his work all seem to indicate a time fairly early in the reign.⁷⁰ Her argument is that Justinian is consistently addressed as already emperor, setting a date for the composition not earlier than 527. Chapter 72 refers to the empress Theodora, who died in 548, as still living. The work was, therefore, completed before then, and, in her view, probably not long after the catastrophic Nika riots (532). Moreover, the reference to teaching men to protect justice (ch. 1) refers to Justinian's law reform and consolidation programme, begun in 528 and completed in 533. (We know there was opposition to this, since Procopius' hostile references to Tribonian, then *quaestor*, and in effect 'Minister for Law Reform', probably reflected not just personal hostility but a wider contemporary, conservative hostility to [here, legal] 'innovation' [*res novae*] found in, say, John the Lydian and Procopius elsewhere.)⁷¹ Next, chapter 4 alludes, she believes, to those lying destitute in the streets after the destruction in the Nika riots of

⁶⁹ Not included in this selection.

⁷⁰ Frohne (1985), 160ff.

⁷¹ 'Innovation' also characterises 'bad' emperors such as Domitian and Caracalla (Justinian is carefully not mentioned): *On Magistracies* 1.49, 2.19. Procopius, *SH* 20.16; *Wars* 1.24.16.

an asylum between Hagia Sophia and the adjacent basilica of Hagia Eirene, which Justinian had rebuilt more splendidly. The chapter points, therefore, to a publication date shortly *after* those riots.⁷² Chapter 17, which describes Justinian as a philosopher-king, must, however, *precede* the downfall of the Platonic school at Athens around 529, as a result, direct or indirect, of imperial legislation.⁷³ Chapter 20 probably alludes to victories against the Persians, preceding the ‘Eternal Peace’ with Persia in 532, and the initial spectacular victories in North Africa the same year.⁷⁴ Finally, chapter 30, prescribing a stringent selection process for officials, is an implied criticism of the influx of powerful ‘new men’ into the imperial service of the new regime whom Procopius so viciously criticised.⁷⁵ All this shows, in Frohne’s submission, that Agapetus published his *Exposition* shortly after the catastrophe of the Nika riots when the world was, allegedly, going right again following victories in North Africa, peace in the Near East, and the completion of the publication of the new law codes. This justifies the up-beat tone of the work.

However, her identification of these contemporary allusions is not without problems. For example, we cannot date the work both *before* the downfall of the Athenian school (529) and *after* the Nika disaster and the ‘Eternal Peace’ with Persia (532). Others, like me, would see the post-Nika years as altogether less joyous – with a regime desperate to secure and consolidate its legitimacy, even its hold on power.⁷⁶ Taken together, Frohne’s arguments do not take us much further than confirming our original hypothesis: publication near the beginning of the reign. They do, however, remind us that we must relate Agapetus’ work to contemporary concerns.

(iii) *The Dialogue on Political Science*

Dating the *Dialogue* is harder. Averil Cameron noticed that, if we cannot precisely date the work, it seems to be written in the senatorial interest. So it could easily reflect senatorial resentments *either* in the context of the Nika riot and its aftermath of senatorial confiscations and executions – which

⁷² Frohne (1985), 160; *Bldgs.* 1.2.14–19.

⁷³ What exactly happened to this school and why remains debatable: see Watts (2006), with full refs. to earlier literature.

⁷⁴ *Wars* 1.22; 3–4.

⁷⁵ *SH* 21.8–13 for Justinian’s allegedly vicious ‘selection process’. But these men had started their evil work (in Procopius’ eyes) even before Nika: *SH* 12.12ff.

⁷⁶ Above all, Meier (2003), see n. 10 above; Bell (forthcoming).

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have, understandably, lead some scholars to plump for an early date;⁷⁷ or later in the reign, when the emperor seemed to be even less considerate of the senatorial elite, and there was a regrouping of senators around his eventual successor, Justin II. There was also a revival of factional violence and persecution of Pagans in this later period, combined with outbreaks of plague and famines, as well as a further plot against Justinian in which even the great Belisarius was allegedly involved.⁷⁸ The prominence that Paul gives to this conspiracy in his *Description* (*ekphrasis*) illustrates both these tensions and the continuing vulnerability of a regime for which the *Dialogue* itself constitutes further evidence.⁷⁹ The latter work not only concerns itself with the choice of patriarchs, but recognises (5.51) the potential importance of the patriarch to senators in determining the imperial succession. The realism of the *Dialogue*'s approach, suggests Cameron, was shown in the last year of Justinian's reign – although in this suggestion, she simplifies the arrangements the *Dialogue* proposes: these do not just involve the patriarch, but a complex process including sortition. Cameron also passes over the importance our author rightly placed on securing the legitimacy of a new emperor *across all social classes* (5.46–53). This last year of Justinian's reign (565) saw the deposition of one patriarch and a replacement, John Scholasticus, who became actively involved in Justin II's elevation: he aligned himself with a senatorial faction, thereby producing a grouping 'nicely supported', as Cameron puts it, 'by the "laws" put forward in this work'. Seen from Cameron's perspective, therefore, the *Dialogue* is making recommendations, in the light of experience under Justinian, for the conduct of the successor regime at a time of upper-class discontent.

Mazzucchi disagrees.⁸⁰ His arguments fall into three categories: those allusions that are compatible with any date during Justinian's reign and not, therefore, precisely dateable; those that are wrong; and, last, those we must take seriously. The first group includes references to a Persian king, Firoz, prudently punishing misbehaviour by his troops (4.63–68), an episode with

77 For some of the arguments on dating, see Averil Cameron (1985), 250–51; Fotiou (1981), 539ff.

78 See e.g. Mal., *Chronicle* 487–94; *Dialogue* 5.103ff. Belisarius (c. 505–65) was the most celebrated general of Justinian's reign. He suppressed the Nika riot in 532, but is best known for his reconquest of North Africa in 533–34, and later of Sicily and Rome itself (536). In 559–60, he led an emergency defence against the Kotrigur Huns who threatened Thrace and Constantinople.

79 Paul, *Description* 20–35. See also Corippus, 4.384ff.

80 Mazzucchi (2002), xiii–xv (in Latin).

the flavour of a moral fable,⁸¹ but of contemporary political relevance and a target of legislation designed to prevent the mistreatment of civilians by troops: for instance, in *Just. Nov.* 130 (545). Also mentioned is the Frankish takeover of Gaul (4.43–44). Firoz died in 484; the Franks took over Gaul in 507. But nothing necessarily follows from these facts about the dating of the *Dialogue*. For even towards the end of Justinian's reign, they remained relatively recent events of importance.

He also considers that the proposed law in the *Dialogue*, whereby an emperor must designate a successor, refers to Justin I's decision in 527, four months before he died, to designate Justinian as his co-emperor and successor (5.162–64).⁸² Securing a peaceful transition, in the absence of any clear rules of hereditary succession, was a problem for the Roman Empire from its inception – and never resolved, to its great harm, during the whole subsequent history of Byzantium: the 'politicking with violence' that followed the death of Anastasius in 518 had shown this only recently.⁸³ Justin's action in naming his successor, therefore, was prudent, especially as Justinian's position under his uncle seems to have been more vulnerable than Procopius represents it, in his desire to 'credit' Justinian with all the failings of Justin I, whom it suited him to portray as an illiterate geriatric with the real power controlled by his nephew (*SH* 6.10–18). Many, including the author of the *Dialogue*, may reasonably have thought more systematic arrangements should be introduced in future.⁸⁴ But that does not imply an early date for our text. The protracted period throughout Justinian's own, childless – and politically troubled – old age when no successor had been designated seems an even stronger candidate for inspiring such a legislative proposal. (In the end, as mentioned above, Justin II only secured power through a bloodless coup involving senators and the patriarch.) My counter-argument is essentially a re-formulation of Cameron's point on the previous page.

In this same category of 'undatables' falls Mazzucchi's contention that the praise given (5.78) to the wives of the ruling class (our 'optimates') and the valuable services they will perform is an oblique tribute to Theodora, the value of whose advice was, for instance, mentioned by the emperor in the

81 Perhaps reflecting the way the earlier Persian monarch, Cyrus, had become a stock rhetorical figure to point a moral: for such a use of Cyrus in the *Dialogue*, see 4.3 below.

82 Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle* a.527.

83 See Vasiliev (1950), ch. 1, for details with sources.

84 For the struggle for power under Justin I, see Croke (2007), Bell (forthcoming).

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preface to a major law reforming public administration.⁸⁵ What this has to do with the date of our text (or even Theodora) is not spelt out. Paul could, after all, honour Theodora, now promoted to be God's policy advisor, in 563, fifteen years after her death in 548.⁸⁶ Mazzucchi seems, moreover, to ignore the respect consistently given to women in the Neoplatonic tradition to which our writer belongs (see below), even if our author, like Plato in his *Laws*, which describes his 'second-best' polity, does not give women the equal status with men, including the right to function as rulers of his ideal state, that they enjoy in his *Republic*.⁸⁷ Similarly questionable is his belief that our author's enthusiasm for Latin literature and Cicero's *Republic*⁸⁸ – he could almost as easily have mentioned, amongst others, Livy, Juvenal or Seneca – is more appropriate to a text dating from the beginning of Justinian's reign, after which Latinity faded in Constantinople. Possibly. One recalls that, while the overwhelming bulk of Justinian's *Corpus of Civil Law* (528–33) is in Latin, much of his later legislation is not. But the Latin culture of the capital was more vigorous than often imagined, notwithstanding the complaints of John the Lydian, who prided himself on his Latinity, that Latin had ceased to be the administrative language of the empire. Junillus Africanus, the successor to the law-reformer Tribonian as *quaestor*, and effectively chief legal minister to the emperor in 541/2, where he remained until his death in 548/9, published, probably during his period of office, his influential and 'theologically correct' introduction to Christian belief in Latin.⁸⁹ Even in the next reign, Corippus could count on an audience for one lengthy panegyric at least – delivered in Constantinople and in Latin.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ *Just. Nov.* 8.1.

⁸⁶ Paul, *Description* 62.

⁸⁷ O'Meara (2003), 83–86, on 'Philosopher Queens', for the Platonist tradition of a community of virtue shared by men and women for whom gender differences, as reported at length by Proclus, *On the Republic* 1.237.5–13, were for most only 'a product of different modes of life'. Cf. Olympiodorus, *On the Gorgias* 105.25–29: 'woman differs from man in no respect, excepting the genital parts, so that often a woman might live a superior political life to a man ...' One recalls the reverence in this tradition accorded to such teachers as Sosipatra (late C4) in Pergamum and Hypatia (d. 415) in Alexandria; the latter's murder by Christians was equated, as by Damascius (*Philosophical History* fr. 102), with the death of the Athenian philosopher, and Plato's mentor, Socrates.

⁸⁸ Cicero is referred to in *Dialogue* 4.53, 5.48, 64, 151, 152, 155, 161 and 209.

⁸⁹ See Maas (2003) for text, translation and introduction to Junillus' *Handbook of the Basic Principles of Divine Law*. Maas's work has the further merit of countering Procopius' malicious criticisms (*SH* 20) of Junillus.

⁹⁰ John the Lydian, *On Magistracies* 2.12, 3.42; Corippus. For the continuing significance of Latin culture in Byzantium, see n. 181 below.

In the second category, where Mazzucchi's arguments seem wrong, fall the *Dialogue's* recommendations that the empire should concentrate on defending its own frontiers rather than indulging in foreign adventures (5.153); and that neglect of infantry, in contrast to cavalry, threatened the state (4.39–40). It would, in Mazzucchi's judgement, have been impossible to maintain either position after the spectacular cavalry victories in winning back North Africa during Belisarius' reconquest in 533. It is true that Procopius (*Wars* 3.10.7) tells us that the wisdom of Justinian's policy of reconquest was strongly opposed, by no less than John the Cappadocian amongst others – in a society where the disastrous attempt to reconquer North Africa from the Vandals in 468 was still remembered. Even if we do read 5.152 as opposing an expansionary foreign policy – which is questionable – as opposed to advocating self-reliance and eschewing divination, advice to concentrate on home defence was equally, if not more, apposite later in the reign, given the military pressures in both the Balkans and the Near East. We recall, for example, the trauma reported by Procopius of the loss of Antioch (and other rich provinces) to the Persians in 540, and the strain of continuing in parallel the reconquest of Italy where momentum had been lost – Italy was not finally subjugated until 561, even if sufficient progress had been made by 554 for the emperor to issue a '*Pragmatic Sanction*' setting out the rules governing a final settlement.⁹¹ After this, an emphasis on home defence becomes even more understandable; it certainly gives no grounds for rejecting a later date for the *Dialogue*.

The same holds for the debate on the relative merits of cavalry and infantry. Menas' advocacy of the primacy of infantry has been taken by Mazzucchi (2002, xiv) to show that the *Dialogue* cannot have been written later than 533, when Belisarius defeated the Vandals and re-took Africa after two brilliant *cavalry* victories. He could also have cited the way Procopius singles out contemporary mounted and heavily armed bowmen as representing the acme of military progress.⁹² But notwithstanding the cavalry's increasing importance, Mazzucchi's conclusion does not necessarily follow. Averil Cameron dismissed Mazzucchi's earlier version of this argument on the grounds that the discussion in the text is set in an archaising context and must not be taken too seriously.⁹³ But this underestimates how, for all its stylistic and other allusions to the Greek classical tradition and whatever

91 Fall of Antioch: *Wars* 2.8. Italy: *Pragmatic Sanction* (included as *App.* vii in Justinian *Novellae*, eds. Schöll and Kroll [1928]).

92 *Wars* 1.1.

93 Averil Cameron (1985), ch. 14.

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reservations one may entertain of the merits of some of its specific recommendations, the *Dialogue* seeks here as elsewhere to engage with current issues. In fact, one of the interlocutors, Thomas, pertinently points out (4.38) that Menas' argument, in appealing to ancient Roman precedent, takes no account of changes in warfare, including the character of enemy forces, over several hundred years.

The infantry still remained vitally important in the sixth century. Yes, Dara, Ad Decimum and Tricamarum in North Africa were cavalry victories in which the Roman cavalry engaged, if unexpectedly, the enemy before the infantry arrived.⁹⁴ But, in other battles, the cavalry dismounted and fought *on foot*: e.g. Taginae and Mons Lactarius in Italy,⁹⁵ Mammes in N. Africa⁹⁶ and the River Hippis in Lazica.⁹⁷ Modern military historians emphasise the continuing central role of infantry: John Haldon, for example, notes a shift towards cavalry by the later sixth century, but does not see this as reducing the infantry role to insignificance; Philip Rance has more to say about what this role was – how the infantry could function as the 'hard core' of the army on the battlefield and also its importance in the 'low-intensity operations', especially on rough ground, that increasingly characterised military operations in late antiquity. The *Strategicon*, an important military handbook widely attributed to the emperor Maurice (r. 582–602), recognises this.⁹⁸ If the *Dialogue* is dated later in Justinian's reign, these comments can be seen as a contribution to a contemporary strategic debate on the relative importance of the two arms and the need not to underestimate the infantry role.

More interesting is Mazzucchi's list of topics where the *Dialogue* argued there was a need for government action, and which we know independently were the subject of imperial legislation.⁹⁹ We are meant to infer that this

94 *Wars* 1.13–14, 3.18–19, 4.3.

95 *Wars* 8.29–32, 35.

96 *Wars* 4.11–50.

97 *Wars* 8.30–31.

98 Lee (2005), 113–29; Haldon (1999), 193–97; best of all, Rance (2007), who conveys a vivid impression, through examples, of military operations, as also does Sidebottom (2004). In correspondence, however, Rance has explained that he remains far from certain about the case the *Dialogue* is making about the relative importance of the two arms in this period: for instance, our author, after a considerable 'build up' in his text, has little positive to say about how the infantry can be better used.

99 Mazzucchi's list of mischiefs, with the corresponding legislation – to which we could often add further examples – comprises:

- 4.60–68: losses caused to civilians by the army – *Nov.* 130 (545);

legislation, dated from 533 to 565, though mostly from the 530s, must have *followed* the publication of our text. Mazzucchi also believes that the space and passion that our author (5.97–114) devotes to the evils of conflict between the circus and theatre factions, whether in Constantinople or elsewhere, are inspired by the Nika riot of 532 (so called after the slogan ‘*Nika*’ – Conquer! – adopted by the factions). On this occasion, the two chief factions, the Blues and the Greens, combined (with a little senatorial help) against the emperor in rioting that was eventually crushed, as we have seen, with massive loss of life and destruction of the city.

Mazzucchi could be right. Whatever side one supported, the Nika riot was a disaster, undoubtedly traumatic for all who lived through it and its aftermath. It strongly influenced the emperor’s policy afterwards, especially in terms of his determination to legitimise his regime.¹⁰⁰ Unsurprisingly Procopius and more or less contemporary chronicles, such as Malalas, give it such prominence. But it does not follow that the *Dialogue* was written shortly afterwards. Although, post-Nika, the factional scene was quiescent, it revived towards the end of Justinian’s reign when the chronicles again start providing notices of serious factional and other disturbances.¹⁰¹ A *Dialogue* written in this late period could make its (politically tendentious) points about factional behaviour and the lack of effective government control most convincingly by oblique allusion to the most apocalyptic of all such disturbances.¹⁰² We know nothing of the dramatic date of the *Dialogue* from what remains. But one recalls that Cicero’s *Republic*, for instance, which so influenced our author, was set in 129 BCE – more than twenty years before Cicero was born. Our *Dialogue* too, following precedent, may well have enjoyed a dramatic date considerably earlier than its date of composition.

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- 4.71–72: compensation to the sons of dead soldiers – *CJ* 12.47.3 (533); cf. also Theophylact Simocatta, *Histories* 7.1.7; Jones (1964), 675;
 - 5.18: certain administrative and fee arrangements for the senate – *Nov.* 62 (537);
 - 5.56: separation of civil and military authority in certain provinces (mainly in Asia Minor) – *Nov.* 24–31 (535–36);
 - 5.66–71: clerical and monkish regulation, elimination of abuses etc. – *Nov.* 6 (535), 16 (535), 133 (539), 123 (546) 137 (565);
 - 5.74: controls on immigration from the provinces to the capital – *Nov.* 80 (539);
 - 5.80–81: greater equity etc. in tax collection – *Nov.* 128 (545); and,
 - 5.218: prevention of corrupt purchase of office – *Nov.* 8 (535).

¹⁰⁰ See Bell (forthcoming).

¹⁰¹ See p. 88 below for details.

¹⁰² See *Dialogue* 5.109, with n. 91, for why the *Dialogue*’s treatment of the factions is tendentious.

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As to issues that Mazzucchi noted as being subsequently dealt with by legislation, the individual cases are discussed in the notes to the *Dialogue* below. But some general considerations are relevant. Most of the issues touched on in the *Dialogue* refer to matters of concern throughout the sixth century – or even longer – and thereby make a claim for the *Dialogue* of contemporary social and political relevance. This is clear even from the legislation Mazzucchi cites: measures, for example, dealing with church governance are spread over thirty years. Legislation on the split between civil and military authority (and in some cases its reunion, which he does not mention)¹⁰³ is one phase in a long-drawn-out process of trying to provide effective government in those wide swaths of the empire characterised by disorder, rural violence and the difficulties for tax collection they caused. The administration of taxation, another of Mazzucchi's examples, was an especial problem and an enduring source of complaint. By way of further evidence for this, we have the moans of Procopius, John the Lydian, Evagrius and others; the emperor even acknowledged it in his own legislation.¹⁰⁴ Likewise official malfeasance, especially concerning purchase of office.¹⁰⁵ Other examples would include the legislation noted in relation to 4.60–69, regulating the behaviour of soldiers in their dealings with civilians. Mazzucchi takes all references to such abuses, or, more generally, to areas in the *Dialogue* where it is suggested that reform is needed and which were the subject of legislation, as indications that the work could not have been written *after* such legislation. But this is not a convincing argument, not least because it is notorious that many deep-seated problems continued *after* legislation was enacted – hence so much repetitive legislation.¹⁰⁶

The *Dialogue*'s author did not, therefore, identify, with remarkable prescience, issues to which legislation was later addressed, often more than once. It is rather that, given that there is nothing in the extant text that necessitates an early dating, this kind of reference makes a later date of composition more rather than less probable. For it enables the writer, first, to highlight with the benefit of hindsight the relevance of his treatise to points of general, long-term public concern; and, second, to do so still more artfully and effectively if his *Dialogue*, following the precedents set by Plato and Cicero, who are both echoed throughout his work, was *set* at a date early in

103 E.g. *Just. Nov.* 145.

104 E.g. in *Just. Nov.* 149, where the emperor seeks to justify taxes, but also in many *Novels* dealing with administrative reform in Asia Minor: n. 99 above.

105 Kelly (2004), esp. ch. 4.

106 Harries (1999), esp. ch. 5, on this striking feature of imperial legislation.

the reign, though probably after the Nika riot.¹⁰⁷

Finally, a ‘Health Warning’: Plato’s *Menexenus* cautions anyone trying to date a ‘Platonic’ dialogue by reference to its contents. In it, ‘Socrates’ is permitted to make a ‘funeral oration’ on the dead of the Corinthian War – a war that began in 395 BCE, four years after Socrates’ own execution!

4. AGAPETUS – *ADVICE*: HIS SOURCES, METHODS AND THOUGHT

(i) Sources

It would be a pardonable, if misleading, generalisation to say that Agapetus’ *Advice* was wholly derivative and of minimal intellectual, let alone political, interest: pardonable, because so much of the work can be traced back to earlier writers; misleading, because what counts is what Agapetus *did* with the material he had harvested from others, not least in injecting a degree of political radicalism hard to find in the upper-class prose literature of the period. This section addresses both issues in turn.

Since the first modern, printed edition in 1509, there have been some 140 further editions, translations and commentaries, including over 60 from the ‘golden age’ of Agapetus studies, the sixteenth century. But there have only been five editions and translations, including this one, two German full- and one English part-translation, since Migne’s edition in 1867; the last complete English translation dates to 1564.¹⁰⁸ This reflects an accelerating decline in most of Europe from the eighteenth century onwards of monarchy, together with any doctrine of the ‘divine right of kings’, including its political and ideological centrality and the Christian religion that underpinned it. Most monarchies have now been supplanted by republics. Where monarchy has survived, in such places as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands or Scandinavia, the doctrine has been replaced by such ideologies as liberalism or social democracy, and monarchy retains only a largely symbolic role. Most scholarship has, however, concentrated on Agapetus’ sources (and his rhetorical tropes)¹⁰⁹ rather than his political significance. Happily, after four

107 As Averil Cameron (1985), 250, also suggested.

108 Frohne (1985), 19–110. Her doctoral thesis (in German) is indispensable, especially for Agapetus’ sources and the history of his text. I am much indebted to her work, especially in this section.

109 E.g. internal rhymes, antitheses, homoioteleuton, paronomasia, alliteration etc. See Blum (1981).

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hundred years of scholarship, a large measure of consensus now exists on the former.

These sources fall into three main groups. First, works by Isocrates, the fourth-century BCE Athenian rhetorician and educator, best remembered for his seminal importance in defining and promoting what constituted the basis of elite literary and rhetorical education (*paideia*) for the rest of antiquity. Three books, written roughly between 374 and 365 BCE, were of particular importance to Agapetus in terms both of style and substance: *To Demonicus*, which is classed with the next two discourses owing to their shared concern with the proper conduct of life, in this case with man's relation to the gods, to humanity in general, and in relation to the recipient in developing his own virtuous character;¹¹⁰ *To Nicocles*, the young king of Cyprus, who may have been a pupil of Isocrates, offering a compendium of advice on how to be a good ruler; and *Nicocles or The Cyprians*, ostensibly a work by the king himself on the duties of subjects. The links in terms of subject-matter with the *Advice* are clear, while allusions to them in it are concentrated, Frohne notes, though not exclusively, in chs. 18–32 (especially the *Demonicus*) and 47–57. Less obvious, though relevant to Agapetus' style, is how these texts combine practical with more high-flown advice. The material thus comprises Isocrates' own precepts with others drawn from earlier Greek gnomic writers.¹¹¹ His own material is rather loosely thrown together, as he himself conceded,¹¹² and in a way not wholly unlike like that of Agapetus.

By contrast, the writers in the second main group are largely Hellenistic writers, mostly neo-Pythagoreans, of whom excerpts survive in the early fifth-century anthology of Stobaeus, which includes writers from Homer onwards, though apparently no Christians. These appear to have been read earlier in Neoplatonic schools, including in the fourth century CE.¹¹³ They provide us with most of what little remains of Hellenistic theorising about kingship, and were written in a wholly different political climate when the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond, including Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) and, more briefly, Iran were ruled in a number of very large

110 The authenticity of the *Demonicus* has been challenged; what matters here is the use Agapetus made of this work. (Whether *Demonicus* was a Cypriot is also doubtful.) All three Isocratean texts are conveniently collected together, with useful introductions and English translations, in *Isocrates: Volume I*, ed. Norlin (1928 and later reprints), in the Loeb Classical Library.

111 See n. 139.

112 Isocrates, *Antidosis* 68.

113 O'Meara (2003), 97.

kingdoms by a variety of Greek monarchs, chiefly descended from the generals of Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE). In their writings, kingship is now a given. But it remained to be defined and legitimised. Indeed, it is helpful to see their writing as creating, in the language of the Italian political philosopher Gramsci, a new, hegemonic ideology – that is, an ideology safeguarding the interests of a ruling class, here the Hellenistic rulers, their associates and, more generally, those who benefited from their regimes, by promoting its acceptance by society at large.¹¹⁴ The essence of their approach was to see the king standing in the same relation to the ‘city’ as God to the cosmos and as the embodiment of law (Diotogenes and, later, Plutarch); he is the legitimate imitator of God (Sthenidas); the king either has the *Logos* (Word) of God as his guiding principle (Plutarch) or incarnates it (Ecphantus – who also describes God as the archetype of the true king); while for Plutarch, the king’s virtuous activity is an imitation (*mimesis*, in Greek, as in Agapetus) of the divine virtue. He must love men, be their good shepherd (Archytas), and so on.¹¹⁵

Apart from the suggestion that a king could incarnate God’s Word – something reserved by Christians for Jesus (John 1.14) – all these attributes of a model (Pagan) king or emperor could be adopted by Bishop Eusebius (in his *Tricennial Oration*, celebrating thirty years of rule by the first Christian emperor) and applied to the first Christian emperor, Constantine. He also supplemented these authors with material from Christian writers such as Origen and Clement of Alexandria, and from the Bible.¹¹⁶ Similarly,

114 A. Gramsci (1891–1937) was imprisoned under Mussolini when he wrote his *Prison Diaries* (Eng. trans. 1971) in which he developed, between 1929 and 1935, his concept of a hegemonic ideology.

115 Diotogenes and Sthenidas, Neopythagoreans variously dated between C3 BCE and C2 CE, of whom virtually nothing is known apart from their views on kingship, which may only have been attributed to them. Ecphantus, a C4 BCE Pythagorean, best-known for a Neoplatonic treatise *On Kingship* (wrongly) attributed to him. Archytas, also a C4 BCE Pythagorean philosopher and mathematician, whose views on music may have influenced Plato, whom he appears to have known. Little is known for certain about his political views. Plutarch (before 50 CE–after 120), was a prolific, influential and popular rhetorician, Platonic philosopher and religious writer, now best-known for his parallel biographies of famous ancient Greek and Roman statesmen and generals. He was widely read in Byzantine times. *OCD* provides further information (where it exists) on all these writers.

116 Origen (c.185–c.254) prolific, influential and controversial Alexandrian biblical critic, exegete, spiritual writer and theologian, who may have castrated himself, in accordance with Matt. 19.12. Much of his writing is lost or known only in doubtful translations. He held *inter alia* that, in the end, all souls, even Satan’s, would be saved. Unsurprisingly, he was condemned at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553. Clement (c.150–c.213), born in Athens of

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Eusebius' argument that the king/emperor, having been shaped in the image of the divine kingdom, looks up 'as if to an archetypal Form' according to which he rules, recalls nothing so much as Plato's philosopher-rulers in his *Republic*.¹¹⁷ His *Oration*, in fact, provided an important source for the 'standard model' of royal rule to be employed by orators in praising the emperor. This rhetorical rule (*basilikos logos*) remained available for later generations, including Agapetus, to follow.¹¹⁸

In fact, there was a flourishing, wider literary tradition, later dubbed the 'Mirror for Princes', especially in the form of speeches, which dated from Isocrates and Xenophon in the fourth century BCE onwards. And this set out criteria for a good monarch. Much scholarly attention has been devoted recently to such imperial panegyric.¹¹⁹ Thus, close to our period, we find major fourth-century examples in the *Funeral Oration* (*Or.* 18) by the Antiochene orator Libanius for his friend and patron, the emperor Julian; and we have Julian's own *Heroic Deeds of the Emperor Constantius, or, On Kingship* (*Or.* 2). Other ingredients of the tradition were supplied, for example, by the Christian Neoplatonist, and later bishop, Synesius of Cyrene (c.370–c.413), in his *On Ruling* (*de regno*). This combined political theory with practical political advice to the Eastern emperor, Arcadius (r. 383–408). Everywhere we find the influence of rhetorical theory, of whom some of the best-surviving examples are texts associated with the influential, late third-century Menander Rhetor, which contained guidance on ceremonial addresses, including those to emperors, and which contributed to the development of the standard model we noted above.¹²⁰ *Platonopolis*, a recent book (2003) by Dominic O'Meara on Neoplatonic political theory, cites further writers who influenced this tradition, as does the German, W. Blum (1981). But the central idea was caught in a classic article by the English Byzantinist, Norman Baynes:

The basis of political philosophy is to be found in a conception of the imperial government as a terrestrial copy of the rule of God in Heaven: there is one God

Pagan parents, whose prolific theological and controversial writings show a wide knowledge of classical Greek literature. His theology helped pave the way for Origen.

117 For the philosophical problems which the *Dialogue* rightly saw as entailed in governing by reference to a transcendental Form, see below.

118 Eusebius, *Tricennial Oration*, trans. and comm. Drake (1976); *Life of Constantine*, trans. and comm. Averil Cameron and S. G. Hall (1999). This later work reinforces the points made in the former; it does not, however, seem to have been widely known in C6. See *Introduction* to Cameron and Hall's edition, 48–50.

119 See Mary Whitby (1998) for a wide-ranging set of papers with bibliography.

120 Ed. and trans. Russell and Wilson (1981).

and one Divine law, therefore there must be on earth but one ruler and a single law. That ruler, the Roman emperor, is the Vicegerent of the Christian God.¹²¹

Whether Eusebius personally was one of Agapetus' sources is uncertain, although, as O'Meara noted, his first chapter could serve as a summary of the *Tricennial Oration*, while some of the writers we have noted were certainly known to our man. More important, thanks to their Eusebian 'consecration', there was now a corpus of materials on the nature of kingship that could be safely drawn on by subsequent writers. These include not just Agapetus, but the author of the *Dialogue*, who is himself no less committed than Agapetus to the idea of kingship/imperial rule imitating the rule of God, or Paul, whose production in some ways complies with the 'Menandrian' rules more closely than either of the two others. Other panegyrists in this tradition include, for instance, in the sixth century, the poet Corippus, who could write in these Eusebian terms of Justinian's successor, Justin II:

Christ granted the Lords of the earth to have power over all things.

He is omnipotent; and he [*sc.* the emperor] is the likeness (*or* image) of the Omnipotent.¹²²

The third group of Agapetus' sources is more heterogeneous. It includes two of the best-known (Eastern) Fathers of the Church, Basil of Caesarea (330–79) and Gregory of Nazianzus (329–89), on whom chapters 7, 34, 43, 66, 69, 70 and 72 of Agapetus all depend.¹²³ Less familiar are two further saints, Nilus of Ancyra (or Sinai) (d. c.430) and Isidore of Pelusium (d. c.449–50). Modern scholarship means that, as also with Agapetus and the author of the *Dialogue*, we know less about Nilus than formerly. He has been 'deconstructed', while the authorship of his alleged works (surviving in several languages other than Greek) is disputed. Sadly, it appears to be a romantic fabrication that he was a high official in Constantinople who abandoned his wife to go to Sinai to become a monk, where he led an exciting life, including rescuing a son who had been sold as a slave by 'Saracen' raiders. Similarly, many of the titles of the letters addressed to illustrious officials, even emperors, are now judged anachronistic additions. Nevertheless, a 'Nilus', along with his voluminous literary output, genuine or attributed, was well known as a substantial intellectual in the early Byzantine period; Alan Cameron has argued that the bulk of the correspondence at least – comprising 1,061 letters – is genuine, even if edited by an

121 Baynes (1955a), 168.

122 Corippus 2.427–28, trans. Averil Cameron. My additions in brackets.

123 So Karl Praechter (1893), 455–58.

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admirer.¹²⁴ He was also believed to have written a book of ‘Admonitions’ (or *Gnomai*), comprising some 200 short moral maxims.¹²⁵ For Agapetus, who did not have twentieth-century scholarship to confuse him, the appeal of this corpus, which emphasised the imitation of Christ as the way to perfection, is obvious.

The same is broadly true of the more securely known Isidore, who retired to the monastic life near the city of Pelusium on the Egyptian coast, where he became famous for his austerity. Theologically orthodox, he was a moderate and a defender of John Chrysostom: he campaigned against the Nestorian ‘heresy’ (which strongly emphasised Christ’s human nature). But he also rightly believed that the patriarch of Alexandria, Nestorius’ great adversary, Cyril, pressed his theological opinions too hard against his opponents. (Gibbon quotes, with approval, Isidore’s view that the episcopal participants in the great ecclesiastical controversies of the fifth century were more strongly motivated by ambition than a love of truth.)¹²⁶ Of his voluminous literary output, ‘only’ some 2,000 letters remain. Mostly short, sober, well-written, with a sharp awareness of wider social issues (e.g. of the social function of the circus factions in preventing sedition),¹²⁷ they contrast markedly with other virulent, contemporary Christian theological discourse and constitute in themselves a valuable historical source.¹²⁸ They fall into three classes: on dogma, concerning monastic and ecclesiastical discipline, and, most relevant here, moral guidance for men of all conditions. They clearly impressed Agapetus: Frohne estimates that there are 204 echoes of Isidore in Agapetus’ 72 paragraphs.¹²⁹

(ii) Agapetus’ Views on Philosophy and Religion

Of the remaining sources,¹³⁰ Agapetus is aware of the Platonic philosophical

124 Alan Cameron (1976b). Nilus’ *Tales* (or *Narrations*) are translated and their historical background discussed in Caner (2009).

125 The whole (Greek) corpus is available in *PG* vol. 79. Another name for this work is *Kephalaia* (or *Chapters*), which also appears in the long title of Agapetus’ *Ekthesis ... Parainetikon Kephalaion* (= Exposition of ... advisory chapters). Also *ODB* s.v. ‘Neilos of Ancyra’.

126 Isidore, *Ep.* 1.25, 4.57, with Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, ed. Womersley (1994), vol. 2, ch. 47, p. 947.

127 Isidore, *Ep.* 90, and in striking contrast to the view taken in *Dialogue* 5.97–115.

128 See e.g. Bell (forthcoming), Barnes (1996).

129 Frohne (1985), 245–48.

130 These do not include Philo, the C1 Hellenised Alexandrian Jew, whose voluminous writings influenced both Christian theology and Neoplatonism. By some process, as yet unexplained, a number of passages from Agapetus are cited in Maximus the Confessor and

tradition: chapter 17 refers to the current ‘age of felicity’ in which ‘philosophers [here, Justinian] are kings’. This view is attributed to an unnamed philosopher, in reality Plato, for whom this was a central requirement of his ideal *Republic* (e.g. 5.473d). But it turns out that, for Agapetus, the beginning of wisdom – ‘philosophy’ means, etymologically, the ‘love of wisdom’ – is not here the Platonic search for wisdom through reasoning and intellectual (and moral) self-improvement, as it is also in the *Dialogue*, but the ‘fear of the Lord’.¹³¹ This is less surprising than one might think: we are dealing with a sophisticated work in a culture in which even highly educated writers can describe an illiterate ascetic or certainly an uncultured holy man – John the Baptist is an example cited by John Chrysostom – as ‘a philosopher’ because he loves the ‘(Divine) Wisdom’.¹³² Agapetus’ trope is unlikely to have been offensive to the devoutly Christian Justinian or to those, clerical or lay, who thought on similar lines. But it was also a time when the emperor could promulgate a code of laws, soon after his accession, in which, as an integral part of his efforts to legitimise his rule, he reaffirmed legislation against Pagans (or ‘Hellenes’) and heretics.¹³³ Action was also taken against the Platonic School in Athens.¹³⁴

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that, whatever Agapetus’ personal views, a work targeted at the emperor near the start of his reign contains little that can be regarded as ‘philosophical’, whether in terms of style of argumentation or prescription. However, even if the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, it is not necessarily the end of it – although Agapetus is too politick to spell this out. As the text stands, Agapetus can be read in three ways without being himself committed to any one interpretation: the emperor is a Platonic philosopher-ruler; the emperor is a God-fearing Christian monarch; or, and probably for most of his original readers, both.

There is, however, no compelling reason to believe that Agapetus is hostile to philosophy (or Platonism), apart perhaps from a lack of explicit

other authors as belonging to Philo. In consequence, some commentators have taken these original passages in Agapetus (in chs. 12, 21, 23, 28, 50, 63, 64) as borrowings or echoes of Philo. See Henry (1967), 284–91, for details of this confusion complete with texts (which are cited in Greek).

¹³¹ Ps. 110, Prov. 1.7.

¹³² For John, see John Chrysostom, *Hom. 37.1 in Matt. 1*. See also, *PGL s.v. philosophos/philosophia*.

¹³³ *C. Summa* (529), introducing the 1st edition of the *Codex Justinianus*. See *CJ* 1.5 for the best example of legislation against Pagans, heretics, Jews, Samaritans and Manichaeans. For the emperor’s efforts to legitimise his rule more generally, see Bell (forthcoming).

¹³⁴ Watts (2006), with full bibliography.

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philosophy in his work. We should take seriously Henry's proposal that Agapetus was suggesting, however obliquely, how a Christian emperor could finally embody what for Plato was only an aspiration¹³⁵ – hardly so remarkable or daring a position when Platonic ideas of kingship had by then been thoroughly absorbed into the standard rhetorical tradition. Agapetus is careful, for example, to bring out more than once that good behaviour (as he defines it) is in the emperor's own best interest (e.g. chs. 5, 8, 18, 24, 44, 60, 64). He also sees the emperor's own moral behaviour as an integral part of his becoming a good emperor, in the same way as the Platonic tradition consistently saw, from Plato onwards, the personal development of the 'political' virtues – practical wisdom, courage, moderation, justice, which are required to subject his own passions and will to his reason¹³⁶ – as a necessary pre-condition of the philosopher's ability to govern the wider polity.¹³⁷ Above all, there is that reference, noted above, to Plato's ideal philosopher-king in chapter 17. Moreover, if explicit philosophy is absent, in striking contrast to the *Dialogue*, explicit Christian teaching is not much in evidence either, apart, that is, from reminders of God's judgement on sinners (ch. 69) or the frailty of all men (chs. 23, 64), including emperors. Christian theology, in any technical sense, is absent, although one commentator cites Agapetus' use of technical Christian terms; on the other hand, we can simply note, for instance, his repeated use of 'pious' (chs. 5, 11, 15, 60), attributed also to Pagan Roman emperors, as a term of the highest praise.¹³⁸ The emperor, in effect, is to purchase his own ticket to heaven by his good behaviour, rather than through redemption. What matters is that in the absence of formal constraints upon him, the law, say, or powerful public institutions, the only 'control' on the emperor is his own moral sense – and the elusive eye of God. (We shall return to the possible Christological implications of Agapetus' position below.)

So was Agapetus a Christian? There is, as with the *Dialogue*, an

¹³⁵ Henry (1967), 296.

¹³⁶ Plotinus' definition, *Enneads* 1 2.1.17–21.

¹³⁷ Plato, *Gorgias*. See O'Meara (2003), chs. 8–9, for the importance of this dialogue in Neoplatonic 'political' education (i.e. in the 'political virtues').

¹³⁸ For technical Christian vocabulary, see Letsios (1985) (in mod. Gk.): e.g. 'almsgiving/acts of charity' (*eleemosune*) and 'prayer' (*proseukhe*), ch. 58; 'taking pity' (*eleein*), ch. 51; 'love of the poor' (*philoptokhia*), ch. 60. On the other hand, another of his examples, 'becoming like God' (*homoiosis theōi*), in ch. 3, had been an objective of Pagan philosophy since at least Plato. In his *Theaetetus* 176a–b, he associates this assimilation to God with 'becoming just and pious with wisdom': O'Meara (2003), 8. For piety (*eusebeia*) as the (Pagan) virtue of reverence towards the gods or parents, see Plato, *Rep.* 10.615c etc.

absence of dogmatic theology, although the need for both piety and prayer for guidance are both stressed (ch. 25); there are some apparent allusions to the Bible (e.g. chs. 17 and 67). He also was apparently in Holy Orders, which implies he was a Christian, even though his ecclesiastical and doctrinal sympathies are unknown. We hear nothing, for instance, about the Justinianic project of promoting religious uniformity or extirpating heresy. But our author heavily emphasises his concern for the poor; and, yes, Christ does turn up in the final chapter 72. We have already noted his 'Christian' language. Indeed, one could even argue that since this is a work of rhetoric rather than formal theology, the Christianity is more obtrusive than absolutely necessary. So the answer must be 'yes' – a conclusion that the remainder of this section will reinforce.

But we should not press arguments of this kind too hard: explicit philosophy (or theology) is arguably inappropriate in the kind of collection of maxims Agapetus sought to produce (although see more below on this). For this the ancient Greek gnomic poets, Hesiod, Theognis and Phocylides, whom Isocrates had seen as 'the best counsellors for human conduct', offered a better model, especially once incorporated with later, including extensive Christian, material to produce a work with a more 'politically correct', Christian flavour.¹³⁹ For what we do have in the *Advice* is an outstanding example of how a sixth-century intellectual could combine material from the classical roots of his culture with later Christian accretions, in a way analogous to that in which Eusebius, we saw, had artfully unified Pagan and Christian theories of kingship. What we have is a carefully crafted exercise in applied, non-technical (Christian) philosophy, capable of being read in several ways, whose enduring success in intellectual circles in Byzantium, the Slav world and Western Europe testifies to its various merits.

(iii) Agapetus' Manipulation of his Sources

We can move on to considering how Agapetus uses these sources. In fact, the subjects he chooses from them – whether extracted from *florilega* (or anthologies), from texts read whole, or, as seems most probable, a combination of both¹⁴⁰ – can be categorised under five headings: the appointment

139 Isocrates, *To Nicocles* 43. Hesiod, early Greek didactic poet fl. c.700 BCE; Theognis, elegiac poet c. mid-C6 BCE; *Phocylides*, a gnomic hexameter poem of the early C6 BCE, of which a Phocylides may have been the author. For Isocrates' hostility to a more austere philosophical education, see his *Antidosis*, *passim*; *Against the Sophists*; *Panathenaicus* 1.26–27.

140 Frohne (1985), 249ff.

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of the emperor by God; the relation of the emperor to God; the emperor's relation to his subjects; the qualities required of an emperor; and, finally, the relation between the state and its citizens.¹⁴¹ But our author did not just poke around in his sources to provide a range of maxims which he then served up raw. Given his themes and maxims related to them in his sources, he then artfully reworked them. Frohne, moreover, argues that he 'improved' his sources in accordance with the following principles, all to be found in closely related language in his source-texts. He could thus combine profit for his readers with pleasure by:

- 'imitating the wise-honey bee', taking the best from each flower, and collecting what is useful;¹⁴²
- exalting the holiness of kingship (or imperial rule) above all else;¹⁴³
- adorning material, but moderately, thereby avoiding excess and exaggeration, with a view to enhancing its utility and its beauty.¹⁴⁴

Frohne shows, with diagrams, just how complicated was the stylistic re-working, re-ordering and splicing together of related source texts. She thereby also illustrates the difficulties in relating a particular chapter to its source(s). In fact, she may even understate them. Agapetus may well also have been guided in his choice of material by the kind of 'rules' for the composition of encomia of the emperor that one finds in, say, Menander Rhetor. It is, for example, striking how much Agapetus stresses, as Menander had urged, the importance of a love of humanity (*philanthropia*) in the emperor, of which his justice as well as his mercy are both parts.¹⁴⁵ But the result of his authorial labours was no treatise, but a short work whose only organising principles are, first, robust opening and closing chapters enunciating the key themes of the work; and, second, the acrostic made up of the initial (Greek) letters of each paragraph, dedicating the work to Justinian, already noted above.

This laborious craftsmanship of the chapters and the absence of a perspicuous thematic structure show, first, that we are dealing with no trite, unoriginal, pious handbook, but a carefully constructed work of literary art

141 Frohne (1985), 151–59, for the attribution of chapters to these broad headings.

142 *To Demonius* 52; Isidore of Pelusium, *Ep.* 2.3; Nilus, *Ep.* 2.208. An image exploited by others, including the C2–3 Christian writer Clement of Alexandria, and the C6 writer John Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow*, *Proem*.

143 *To Nicocles* 6; Isidore of Pelusium, *Ep.* 5.422.

144 *To Nicocles* 41; Isidore of Pelusium, *Epp.* 5.133, 309.

145 Menander Rhetor, *Epideictic Speeches* 2.374.28–375.4. The correspondence between the virtues singled out in Menander and Agapetus is high.

(or rhetoric) which goes far to explain the book's subsequent popularity both East and West.¹⁴⁶ As Henry put it: 'even if we could trace every one of Agapetus' maxims to an earlier source, we would still be justified in reading his treatise carefully as providing evidence for opinions about the emperor and his role that were current in the sixth century'.¹⁴⁷ It further suggests that the work was not intended to be read from beginning to end, though it could be – and in a single sitting – but as something for dipping into as, for instance, into the *Oxford Book of Aphorisms*.¹⁴⁸

Most of the stylistic artistry evaporates in translation; what survives of the metaphor and wordplay (see, for instance, chs. 1, 2, 3...) is not always to modern taste, although the repeated allusions to the transitory character of earthly life have a melancholy appeal similar to allusions to this 'floating world' of ours in classical Japanese poetry.¹⁴⁹ Dvornik (1967, 714), one of the few writers not to dismiss Agapetus as banal at best, praises the book's 'light and elegant style, well-suited for school purposes'. No less interesting is what is and is not included in the finished work – one will look in vain, for instance, for the kind of guidance on the darker arts of government one finds in Machiavelli's *Prince*. This leads directly to the messages Agapetus intended his sophisticated book to convey.

We have already noted the coverage of the *Advice* in general terms. But in the absence of a clear formal structure, it may help to set out the main themes, before reflecting further on their significance.¹⁵⁰ The fundamental point registered, in chapter 1, is the Eusebian doctrine that the emperor's authority is modelled on the likeness of the heavenly kingdom; he should be accessible to his subjects, notwithstanding his exaltation, because of the strength of authority from above (ch. 8). He will – another clearly Christian point – find prayer invaluable in safeguarding his dominions (ch. 58). This is something on which he and Justinian were at one: in his *Novel* (or 'new law') 133.5 (539), the prayers of monks will, the emperor asserts, ensure the well-being of the state, including its army. But the heavenly kingdom is also the goal of the emperor's efforts, and good governance of the earthly empire becomes 'a ladder (*klimax*) ... to the glory above' (ch. 59). This is a point re-emphasised for both the emperor and his wife in the concluding chapter 72.

146 See section viii) below.

147 Henry (1967), 284.

148 Ed. Gross (1983).

149 See e.g. Carter (1991), an anthology with both English translation and transcription into Latin script (*romaji*) of the originals.

150 Henry (1967) is especially helpful here.

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As to precisely how the emperor should make his earthly kingdom a ladder, there is plenty of advice – much of which can also be found, in Latin, in Corippus' *Praise of Justin II*, dating from near the beginning of the next reign. This includes, though Agapetus does not spell it out in detail – there was probably no need – acquiring the classical, personal 'political' virtues of the Platonic tradition. Amongst these, one finds temperance or moderation (*sophrosune*, ch. 18), both preconditions of political wisdom to which others such as piety (*eusebeia*) are added (ch. 15). This is not a narrowly Christian point: the neo-Pythagorean Diotogenes had, for instance, commended 'piety' as a royal virtue before Eusebius had insisted on the piety of Constantine.¹⁵¹ Examples of other ways the emperor should imitate God are provided: in teaching men to respect the law and justice (ch. 1) – advice hardly unwelcome to the great law reformer; in remaining steady among changing circumstances (chs. 11, 13, 33, 34); forgiving, in language echoing the Lord's Prayer, those who have 'trespassed against you'; and, since God abounds in good works, the emperor should 'imitate Him through good works' (ch. 45).

Above all, Agapetus repeatedly commends the virtue of 'humanity', literally, 'love for mankind' (*philanthropia*) in, for example, chapters 6, 40, 50 and 53. Here he once again writes in a venerable classical tradition, more recently reaffirmed in such fourth-century Pagan writers as Themistius, Libanius and the last Pagan emperor, Julian, as well as in rhetorical textbooks, but which had now also been adopted and assimilated into mainstream Christian thinking – to the extent of substituting for the traditional word for the Christian concept of 'love', *agape*. This last only appears twice in the *Advice*, in chapters 20 and 56, denoting the love of subjects for the emperor.¹⁵²

A fundamental question for both Agapetus and the author of the *Dialogue* is how to ensure that the emperor behaves well. For Agapetus, it is axiomatic that no one has the power to discipline such power as that of the emperor (ch. 27). Hence the emphasis on the rewards, above all in the heavenly kingdom, for good behaviour here below (e.g. ch. 59). Perhaps, like Henry,¹⁵³ we should see the imitation of God as serving itself as a kind of control over

151 Quoted in Stobaeus, 4.264–65.

152 See Henry (1967), 301–02, for the history of *philanthropia* and *agape* in Pagan/Christian controversy in the C4. For Menander Rhetor, *philanthropia* (under which he subsumes justice) was the imperial virtue *par excellence* to be commended in encomia of emperors (Men. Rhet. 2.374).

153 Henry (1967), 306–07.

the emperor – there seems no other, after all, except for his conscience – notably in prescribing what to do: good deeds to the poor, wrath tempered by mercy and so on. But notwithstanding the practical problems of controlling an emperor unaccountable to anyone, except to God alone, Agapetus remains emphatic that, despite the assimilation of the earthly to the heavenly glory, the emperor must not get above himself. And here Agapetus' language becomes more noticeably Christian – especially towards the end of his work. The time for repayment of our deeds will come (ch. 44); our actions will testify about us at the final judgement (ch. 9); we should transfer our riches to heaven (ch. 67); and cling not to the transient things of the world, but to what is eternal (ch. 55). The emperor is himself, like everyone else, a 'slave of God' (ch. 68); he too must seek salvation (ch. 62) and will always fail 'to exceed the unsurpassable goodness of God' (ch. 43). If the message has still not got across, Agapetus reminds the emperor, in his closing words (ch. 72), that Christ 'is the king of those who rule and are ruled'. Most forcefully of all, perhaps, in his penultimate chapter 71 Christ is not mentioned, but the emperor is reminded, in White's translation of 1564: 'not to forget that he is made of earth when he ascendeth from dust to the place of Estate; and wythin a shorte time, discendeth into dust againe'.¹⁵⁴

(iv) Agapetus' Silences

Our analysis so far has shown that Agapetus, despite his unsystematic ordering of material, nevertheless possesses a clear, sensible, quite detailed vision of what imitating God entails for a mid-sixth-century emperor – an image that clearly many continued to judge relevant for princely rulers (as well as schoolboys learning Greek) until well into the sixteenth century. But texts can, often do permit more than one reading or application, as we saw on p. 33 above, in connexion with philosopher-rulers (ch. 17); silences may be as important as what is said. Moreover 'an aphorism that has been honestly struck off cannot be deciphered simply by reading it off; this is only

154 'AN EXPOSITION OF CHAPTERS EXhortative, set forth in Greeke without meditatio [*sic*], by Agapetus, Minister of the most holy and greate Churche of God; and nowe translated moste truely out of the Greeke into English, by James Whit Scottishman, as, the learned in both the tongues may easily judge.

PRINTED AT LONDON BY Richard Serll, dwellinge in Fleete Lane at the signe of the halfe Egle and the Key 1564': Ševčenko (1982). The only known copy slumbers, ferociously guarded by the dragons of Duke Humfrey's Reading Room, in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. But it is available on 'Early English Books Online': see <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>.

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the beginning of the work of interpretation proper, which requires a whole science of hermeneutics'.¹⁵⁵ This certainly applies to such a gnomic text as that of Agapetus. Here, given the likely date of publication in the early to mid-530s, we must also take account of such elements in the historical conjuncture as the structural threats to the regime that all but destroyed the emperor in 532, and the great ecclesiastical controversies of the age. These included, in particular, the need to keep the pope in Rome on-side – so far as this was possible – in the run up to the invasion of Italy, while simultaneously seeking to reconcile the Miaphysites (or Monophysites, who saw – and see – Christ as having only one nature out of an original two, human and divine) and achieve Church unity. These give the work, on close reading, its special pungency. For example, it foregrounds the emperor's imitation of God and emphasises the critical political importance of the emperor in determining the welfare of the empire (chs. 2 and 10). But there is, remarkably, no mention of the Church as such. Nor does he draw any distinction between Church and empire – although Justinian did not hesitate to legislate in great detail on ecclesiastical matters, including on actual doctrine.¹⁵⁶ Some account for such omissions on the grounds that including such materials was not an option: Agapetus' choice of genre did not allow it.

But can we say more? There is much in some of his major Christian sources, in Isidore of Pelusium, for instance, on ambitious and squabbling bishops which Agapetus could have exploited. Moreover, these issues were of immense, contemporary imperial concern: in 494, for example, Pope Gelasius had written to the emperor Anastasius to keep separate royal and priestly spheres.¹⁵⁷ The Roman and Eastern churches had already been formally split for the first time from 482–519 in the so-called Acacian schism, owing to the emperor Zeno's assumption of the right to pronounce on matters of doctrine in his *Henoticon*, condemned by the then pope and his successors.¹⁵⁸ Justinian's own career, like that of his predecessor, Justin

155 Nietzsche (1956), *Preface VIII*: a point recognised by more recent literary critics. Cf. the title of Empson's critical classic, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1965).

156 *Nov.* 6.1, addressed to the patriarch of Constantinople, is the classic but far from unique text, in effect representing the priesthood and the empire as complementary, the former dealing with divine, the latter with human affairs, with the emperor conspicuously legislating for the Church. But see also e.g. *CJ* 1.1.6, or the *Chronicon Paschale* s.a. 533, for examples of doctrinal legislation (on 'Theopaschism' – the doctrine that God suffered on the cross).

157 *Ep.* 8, *PL* 59.41B–47A.

158 Literally 'Instrument of [sc. Church] Unity' by which the emperor, with the support of the patriarch of Constantinople, Acacius, had sought to define a basis of agreement between Catholics (which then included those now known as Orthodox) and Miaphysites, largely by

I, was marked by persistent squabbles with Rome, which had, since the fourth century, resented the ecclesiastical claims of Constantinople and of its emperors, especially when they presumed to pronounce on doctrinal matters. Later, probably, than the circulation of Agapetus' work which we assigned earlier (pp. 18–19 above) to the beginning of the reign, one bishop of Rome, Silverius, was to be effectively deposed by Justinian in 537; another, Vigilius, may have been kidnapped, and was certainly confined in Constantinople until he had endorsed the acts of the Second Council of Constantinople in 553. But this Council not only failed to reconcile the Miaphysite churches in the East – which had been an important source of much of the quarrelling with Rome – it also poisoned relations with the Western churches thereafter.¹⁵⁹

Such quarrels between the churches and the emperor had been smouldering for a long time – nor would they be extinguished while a Christian emperor reigned in Constantinople. They were all the more scorching in that, although the specific issues varied over time, they inseparably combined an ideological dimension (over doctrine) with a political dimension (the relative powers of the emperor and the most important other institution of the empire, the churches). Indeed, we might argue that the subordination of the emperor to the 'power to bind and loose', claimed by assertive clerics on behalf of the Church, created an inherent and permanent ambiguity (which began with the first Christian emperor, Constantine), by which the emperor's position in relation to the various church factions must be, and was constantly, (re)negotiated. One cannot believe that a learned, metropolitan cleric was unaware of the issues. Yet Agapetus does not even acknowledge there were problems concerning, say, the relationship of priestly and civil power, the sacerdotal role of the emperor, or the theological basis of Church unity.¹⁶⁰

So why the silence, which on matters of such theological and political salience was, for contemporaries, potentially thunderous and so close to the heart of Justinian? To the answer that the genre in which he was writing excluded such issues one could retort that genres are always evolving; they can be radically transformed.¹⁶¹ Nor do we have grounds for supposing that

passing over the most controversial issues in dispute. Despite its name and intention, it proved highly controversial. Text in Evagrius, *EH* 3.14.

159 For these inter-church 'wars', see Bell (forthcoming) and Sotinel (2005), 267–90.

160 For the first two of these vexed issues, see Dagron (2003).

161 As Procopius transformed that of imperial panegyric, in his *Bldgs.*: Elsner (2007).

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he did not share, in principle, the imperial goal of religious uniformity;¹⁶² nor that, like Procopius, he regarded dispute about the nature of God as ‘senseless’.¹⁶³ There are at least three potential answers to our question.

The first is that his answer is implicit in what he wrote. Justinian, since becoming emperor, ‘had made it the starting-point and basic principle of [*sc.* his] rule to join together the divided priests of the holy churches of God from the East to the West’.¹⁶⁴ For Agapetus, on this interpretation, such an undivided Church under one emperor was no more than a practical corollary of his central tenet (ch. 2) of the rule of an emperor, who was the likeness of God, over a universal state (*enkosmios politeia*). If so, his *Advice* can be read as embodying and tacitly endorsing Justinian’s own strategic conception of his religious role as set out in so much of his legislation around this period, as also later. But it remains strange that Agapetus is silent on something, namely ecclesiastical reconciliation, about which the emperor cared so deeply – and which Procopius could later claim, tendentiously, in his panegyric *Buildings* (1.1.9) as the great achievement of Justinian: ‘he brought it about that the empire stood on the firm foundation of a single faith’.

Might one not do better therefore to hypothesise, second, that these omissions constitute a tacit statement that such things do not fall within the imperial remit? It is one thing to be the *imago Christi* (image of Christ), or the emperor of the world: it is another to be a theologian or quasi-bishop. Maximus Confessor, for example, deals in his *Epistle* 10 with a question from John the Chamberlain (c.630), who had asked why, if all humans are the same, has God then determined that men be ruled by other men? Maximus’ answer is that rule is ordained by God in order to maintain peace and to protect humans from turning on one another: ‘a pious emperor is second to God on earth, minister of the Divine will, with authority from God to reign over human beings’. But, like Agapetus, he does not attribute to the emperor any doctrinal or ecclesial significance. In other words, the idea of a Christian empire under a Christian emperor does not necessarily entail an acknowledgement of a wider religious role for the emperor.

But all this is heady stuff: more intellectually complex than this summary

162 *CJ* 1.5.18 and elsewhere.

163 *Wars* 5.3.

164 Justinian’s *Letter to the first Session of Constantinople II*, Mansi 9.385. Although written in the run-up to the Second Council of Constantinople, this is a fair reflection of his policy since his accession (and even before, judging from his correspondence with the pope in the *Coll. Avell.*).

suggests and politically controversial. If Agapetus was seeking the blessing or patronage of Justinian, then to hint at the kind of views that, for instance, later led Maximus to side with the pope against the emperor, be tortured and eventually die in exile would have been ruinous. Hence the third possibility, the prudent approach, that he sought to speak the truth as he saw it but not necessarily the whole truth, even at the cost of not hinting at matters that would have strengthened the appeal of his work to the emperor. It may, therefore, be the best explanation. But such arguments *ex silentio* are fragile and we shall probably never know why these matters were passed over.

(v) Agapetus' Further Support for the Emperor

Whether or not Agapetus endorsed a universal imperial ecclesiastical jurisdiction, there is no doubt that he endorsed the claim that the emperor should rule over everything more generally. This flows from the concept of divine imitation: God rules over everything in heaven; so should the emperor rule over everything here below. He is to be 'the helmsman ... of the vessel of the universal state' (ch. 2). This should probably be read not just as a pious generalisation, but as endorsing the emperor's initially controversial policy of reconquest in North Africa, Sicily and Italy, a process begun in 533.¹⁶⁵ How, after all, could the universal emperor not restore, with God's aid as his own legislation repeatedly reiterates, his Western empire? But equally, it asserts a doctrine of imperial rule, and thereby once again a different conception of what is entailed by the imitation of God from that of the *Dialogue*. We hear something about the need for careful choice of officials, we learn that the emperor will be held accountable for their failings (ch. 30);¹⁶⁶ but there is nothing in the *Advice* concerning the delegation of authority, especially to the senatorial elite (that is, the 'optimates'), which characterises the *Dialogue*.

On the contrary, Agapetus advises the emperor to concern himself with *everything*, however apparently trivial (ch. 26); in this he faithfully reflects the doctrine of *Just. Nov.* 71. Similarly lacking is the emphasis that the *Dialogue* places on the rule of law. Agapetus' emperor, by contrast, must *voluntarily* submit himself to it – a principle also enshrined in Justinian's

165 *Wars* 3.10. No lesser person than John the Cappadocian, the emperor's chief minister, opposed the North African adventure.

166 Frohne sees this as a guarded criticism of actual and unpopular choices of high officials, as emerged during the Nika riot, when John the Cappadocian and Tribonian were both dismissed, albeit briefly: *Wars* 1.24.

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Institutes.¹⁶⁷ Agapetus' emperor is absolute and – a political point of great salience – less deferential to the elite. Putting to one side the relative merits of both approaches in terms of promoting 'good government', one immediately notices how Agapetus leaves his emperor less constrained, whether by 'optimates' or the law. Like later works in the 'Mirror for Princes' tradition, Agapetus seeks good or legitimate government through the 'moral conversion', in Dagron's words, of the emperor, with no formal external constraints and no sense that the emperor's rule rests on anyone else's consent (although a wise emperor will cultivate his subjects).¹⁶⁸ This reflects the first of several, highly politically salient differences in the approach of Agapetus and that of the *Dialogue*, notwithstanding their shared view that the emperor is, albeit in some again differing sense, the 'imitation of God'.

We can be confident that Justinian and his circle would welcome such maxims: above all, they offer a sympathetic view of his position as God's likeness on earth; their language often reflects that employed in Justinian's own legislation to define his role as the imitation of God, whose perfection he must copy. They assert also that the empire was God's gift alone; that legislation was the emperor's first duty; and the emperor was 'justly' the sole creator and guardian of the laws – though Agapetus has relatively little to say here; finally, they tacitly endorse, as we have seen, some of his more controversial policies.¹⁶⁹ They also strike a (to Justinian) welcome blow against well-born leaders of a senatorial aristocracy that remained, in varying degrees, unreconciled to the 'upstart' Justin I and his nephew. Chapter 4 warns against priding oneself on the nobility of one's ancestors. Hardly applicable to the former swineherd, Justin I; scarcely more to his nephew and successor; nor to many of his relatively lowly-born associates. But, in addition to its wider moralising function, chapter 4 delivered a riposte to those who, in Justinian's Constantinople, did precisely that. Anicia Juliana, for instance, who had built by 528, at her own expense, St Polyeuctus, the greatest and most magnificent church in the Constantinople of her day (until Justinian rebuilt Hagia Sophia). She had also decorated it with a poem boasting of the 'unutterable glory' of her family's name, including her descent from five emperors, and being the mother-in-law of a sixth, Anastasius – one of whose nephews was to be executed by Justinian

167 *JInst* 2.17.8: 'Granted we are not bound by the law, we live however in accordance with the law.'

168 Dagron (2003), 19. What he has to say more generally (ch. 1) on imperial heredity, legitimacy and succession in Byzantium is also highly germane.

169 E.g. *CJ* 1.14.12; 1.27.2; 5.16.27; 5.4.23. *Just. Nov.* 8, 69, 73, 81, 98, 113, 148, 149.

after being proclaimed emperor during the Nika riot – and whose husband, Areobindus, on being considered a possible emperor had prudently fled the capital.¹⁷⁰ As her poem modestly points out:

What choir is sufficient for the achievements of Juliana / who after Constantine, embellisher of his Rome ... after Theodosius /... accomplished a work worthy of her family ... She alone has conquered time and surpassed the wisdom of the celebrated Solomon.¹⁷¹

(vi) Agapetus' Social Concerns

Finally, our closer reading will lead us to give greater political prominence to all the advice on the emperor's need for good works, in which chapter 53 specifically links such works to 'the poor' – something not mentioned by Menander as an imperial virtue, although a good emperor, he reminds us, will seek to minimise the burdens on his subjects.¹⁷² For Agapetus, more fundamentally, it is through the 'provision of good works he becomes loveable to his subjects' (ch. 48), whose approbation provides a non-legalistic alternative to the doctrine of legitimacy spelt out in the *Dialogue* (5.45–48) and dealt with below. We must not see this advice as 'merely' moral exhortation – albeit carrying a heavenly reward: such care for the poor is politically salient. Note especially how, in one of the most specific of all his maxims, chapter 16, Agapetus recommends not simply charity – which even the rich could agree is good, in principle – but what we might describe as socially redistributive taxation. At the same time, he expresses, like many other Christian writers of late antiquity, a concern for the plight of the poor – in this chapter, and most vividly, for those found lying prostrate

170 Her poem (*GA* 1.10) encapsulates aristocratic attitudes opposing Justinian in his early days. For wider senatorial disenchantment and opposition, see e.g. *Wars* 1.25. Also Bell (forthcoming). See also pp. 83–84 below for the importance of this by way of background to Paul's *Description*. For the literary significance of this poem as literature, Mary Whitby (2006). For Areobindus, see Mal., *Chronicle* 407; *PRLE* II s.v. Areobindus.

171 Full text in *GA* 1.10. (tr. in Loeb); Harrison (1989) for St Polyeuctus generally. Fobelli (2005), esp. 193–207 (in Italian). Bell (forthcoming) for the political background. The dating of St Polyeuctus is obscure. See, most recently, Bardill (2004), 111–16: the only certain dates are for completion around 528, and the completion of the entablature containing the poem after 512. But work could well have started earlier; stopped in 512 following the flight of Areobindus, her husband; and only resumed after a troubled five years owing to the rebellion of Vitalian, in 517, after Justin's accession.

172 Menander Rhetor, *Epideictic Speeches* 2.375.

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in the streets.¹⁷³ Justinian was clearly aware of the political advantages of 'welfare' expenditure and he actively indulged in it accordingly. Its value is confirmed by noting how Christian bishops also cultivated and exploited the 'constituency of the poor'.¹⁷⁴ For the political downside of high taxation in terms of articulate resentment on the part of the better-off one has only to register the laments and abuse found in, for example, Procopius, John the Lydian, the ecclesiastical historian Evagrius, or the fact that the emperor himself felt the need to justify taxation in his legislation. The fiscal concessions (from which the better-off classes would be the prime beneficiaries) made after his death by his two successors confirm the political sensitivity of Agapetus' 'fiscal comments'.¹⁷⁵

We can now see better what the *Advice* is trying to achieve. At the most superficial level, it represents the view of a relatively minor cleric (and possibly of like-minded friends and colleagues in his likely audience) on how a relatively new emperor might live up to popular, rather than narrowly elite, expectations in terms of what had now become, since Constantine and Eusebius, or was very fast becoming the Christian hegemonic ideology, but without imposing any external institutional or legal constraints upon him. As such, it is invaluable evidence for what many then regarded as the criteria for a good, divinely guided emperor.¹⁷⁶

(vii) The Need to Secure Legitimacy

Agapetus was also offering a view, from a sympathetic direction, of what an emperor, at a difficult time, needed to do in order to establish the *legitimate authority* of his regime: that is, establish a regime, grounded in moral authority in terms of the values of his own society, which would furnish a more reliable basis for the authority and continued domination of his rule

173 E.g. in the C6 alone, Severus of Antioch, e.g. *Hom* 19, 23, 103; Leontius, *Homilies*; Romanos, *Kontakia* 49, 53.

174 See, in particular, Brown (1992; 2002); Rapp (2005a).

175 Procopius, e.g. *SH* 18ff; John the Lydian, *On Magistracies*, e.g. 3.70; Evagrius, *EH* 4.30. *Just. Nov.* 149; Justin II, *Nov.* 1; Tiberius II, *Nov.* 5. Note Corippus' highly rhetorical account of Justin II's immediate effort, following his accession, to recompense Justinian's financial victims, which indicates the political importance of Justin's actions and is further evidence of strained relations with the financial community: Corippus, 2.357ff. with Averil Cameron's nn. *ad loc.* See also, Paul's *Description* 25ff. for the so-called 'Bankers' Plot' to kill Justinian in 562. Also *JED* 7 and 9 for earlier financial/credit problems in the wake of the great plague (542) and Justinian's desire to keep the 'financial sector' on side.

176 Ševčenko (1954; 1982).

than simply interest, tradition – or fear (although he allows that fear may have a role to play: e.g. chs. 48 and 59). If Agapetus hoped for imperial attention (and reward?) as opposed to merely floating ideas – or demonstrating his rhetorical skills? – amongst the Constantinopolitan intelligentsia, it is also likely that the ideas he put forward were not simply those of his associates and readership. It is probable that they were also carefully judged to appeal to the emperor in both style and content, and accordingly – as in the ecclesiastical domain – avoided anything too original or provocative. On this reading, the concept of legitimacy, both securing and retaining it, is crucial. Other contemporaries also recognised this – most clearly of all, at greater length and with far greater subtlety, the *Dialogue* (5.45ff.). How could they not following, above all, the Nika riot and its aftermath? From this perspective, the most telling chapter, effectively defining the purpose of the whole work in its political aspect, and which retains the salience it had in the sixth century if one substitutes a word such as ‘government’ for ‘ruler’, is ch. 35 (reinforced by ch. 47):

Consider yourself to reign safely when you rule willing subjects. For the unwilling subject rebels when he has the opportunity. But he who is ruled by the bonds of goodwill is firm in his obedience to his ruler.

We should, accordingly, see Agapetus as also providing not simply (sensible) general advice and a moral guide, but an (elegant) survival manual for an embattled emperor. It is remarkable how much of what Agapetus is recommending also appears in the policies of Justinian for consolidating his rule, and the terms in which he sought to justify them. In, for example, demonstrating why he attached the importance he did to his codification of the law (528–534), in much subsequent legislation, charitable works, church building, military success or general propaganda. Particularly important and topical here is Agapetus’ emphasis – as in the *Dialogue* – in his opening paragraph on justice as *the* political virtue. But because Agapetus lays such stress on good works and the interests of the less fortunate in society, he does not merely echo earlier philosophising. This had also emphasised the importance of justice in the well-ruled polity: in Plato’s *Republic*, for example, or in Aristotle, who sets out in persuasive detail why failure to satisfy the requirements of justice (as Aristotle defined it) caused sedition and civil war (*stasis*) – to which the empire was dangerously exposed in Justinian’s day. The emperor’s prudent commitment to justice was stressed not only in the various *Prefaces* to the Justinianic *Code of Civil Law*, but also in dedicatory inscriptions to provincial governors throughout late antiquity: these

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emphasised their judicial activity and their justice, dispensed in courts that operated under the ultimate authority, and symbolically, under the images of the emperor himself.¹⁷⁷

(viii) Agapetus' Popularity East and West

No account of Agapetus' thought can ignore its durability and popularity whether in Byzantium, or in Western Europe and the Slav East also – a success which, of itself, makes it harder to dismiss this work as second-rate. As to Agapetus' 'after-life', two monumental articles by Ihor Ševčenko trace, first, how this work appears to have been the most-read Greek work, other than the narrowly religious, outside Byzantium in the middle ages. He illustrates his survival and influence for more than nine centuries in the Byzantine Empire, including in the popular ninth-century (?) *Romance of Barlaam and Ioasaph*, which may reflect the story of the Buddha, and in the *Precepts* which the emperor Manuel II Palaeologus (r. 1391–1425) composed for his son. In the West, Agapetus flourished especially in Italy, at the Renaissance, as a work of guidance for rulers in the 'Mirror for Princes' tradition: versions of this 'Introduction to wisdom, Banket of sapience, and precepts of Agapetus' were provided for, amongst many others, Mary, Queen of Scots, and Queen Elizabeth I of England.¹⁷⁸

Also, thanks to Agapetus' rhetorically varied style, his classicism and, one suspects, his brevity, he was employed as a textbook for learning ancient Greek. This was a function he also served in Eastern Europe, especially the Slav lands and Romania, where his work may have been translated into a Slav language, Bulgarian, in the eighth century and where its influence, as a foundation of Slav political philosophy, became even greater than in the West. A (translated) copy seems even to have been presented to Ivan the Terrible at around the time Queen Elizabeth was being introduced to it.

Strangely, given the radical nature of part of its message, it seems to have proved an uncontroversial text, read for moral uplift and linguistic interest, though also, one suspects, for its double role as both justifying autocracy and seeking to educate monarchs in an ideologically acceptable way. Ševčenko only detected one reader who demonstrably reacted to its more radical aspects: a certain Jean Picot, *Président aux enquêtes du Parlement de Paris*. In his introduction to a presentation copy in 1563 to Charles IX of

177 Aristotle, *Politics*, Bks 4–5; inscriptions, Robert (1948), 107ff.

178 Frohne (1985), 42. The two earliest translations into English seem to date from 1534 and 1550. The quotation comes from the latter edition.

France, on the latter's coming of age, he wrote that Agapetus' proposal to 'take away from the rich in order to give to the poor and make them equal' was a sentiment that was 'Platonic, barely legal and less Christian'. God had created both the poor and the rich man, who should remain in their respective stations, and it was not permissible 'to take from the one to give to the others'.¹⁷⁹ Such radicalism, however, may well have appeared of less significance when compared with Agapetus' central tenet that the ruler is only effectively constrained by his conscience (and self-interest, with which, for Agapetus, morality happily tends to coincide) and the judgement of God. What more pleasing advice could a Renaissance prince or tsar receive?

5. THE *DIALOGUE ON POLITICAL SCIENCE* – SOURCES, METHODS AND THOUGHT

(i) *Caveat Lector* – Let the Reader Beware!

Only one-and-a-half books out of, probably, an original six now remain. Even the surviving fragments are pitted with gaps; the reading of many words remains uncertain. The only contemporary reference is the brief notice of Photius, already discussed. All our conclusions, therefore, about the work must be tentative. But it is evident that the *Dialogue*'s author is no less indebted to tradition in terms of both form and substance: thus, he writes his philosophy, as befits a follower of Plato, in the form of a dialogue. The dialogue form was not extinct: in the fourth century, for example, Bishop Methodius wrote a stately Platonic dialogue, as a rejoinder to Plato's *Symposium*, in which ten maidens extol virginity. Later, Aeneas of Gaza, a member of the late antique philosophical school located in a city that was then a thriving metropolis, is also best known, like his friend from Gaza, Zacharias Scholasticus, later bishop of Mitylene (d. after 536), for his similarly Christianising Platonic dialogues.¹⁸⁰ However, contemporary philosophers tended to write their philosophy by way of commentaries, while the greatest Platonist of late antiquity, Plotinus (205–269/70), the founder of what we now call Neoplatonism, had written philosophical treatises, his *Enneads*.

¹⁷⁹ Ševčenko (1982), 20 (my translation).

¹⁸⁰ Methodius, *Symposium*, or *On Chastity*; Aeneas, *Theophrastus*, or *On the Incarnation of the Soul and the Resurrection of the Body*; Zacharias, *On the Creation of the World*, or *Ammonius*. For an overview of the philosophic scene in the Justinianic period, see Wildberg (2005).

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The ideas of the *Dialogue* are heavily indebted to classical writers; they also reflect the tradition, given its classic formulation in Eusebius' *Tricennial Oration*, that an emperor (or 'king', in the archaising language favoured in late antiquity) imitates God in his rule. However, our author's sources go wider, and certainly deeper than Agapetus': they demonstrate the range of literary material available to the elite of Constantinople, in Latin as well as Greek.¹⁸¹ Nearly thirty sources, from Homer onwards, to whom our author seems to allude or whom he actually quotes, are listed, sometimes speculatively it must be conceded, by Mazzucchi;¹⁸² our author himself spells out, by no means disingenuously given the use he makes of them, his especial debt to Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle and Cicero (5.208), all of whom lived at least five hundred years before him. But it is to the first and last of these, the Athenian philosopher Plato (c.429–347 BCE), the most famous pupil of Socrates (d. 399 BCE), and his philosophical heirs, and also to the Roman statesman, orator and philosopher M. Tullius Cicero (106–43 BCE), that the debt is strongest.

What has survived, however, falls into two parts: the first, a fragment of Book 4, deals with military matters. A second, longer fragment of Book 5 sets out the author's views on the ideal state and, above all, the role of the emperor. These books are discussed in turn below.

(ii) Book 4 Military Science

The presence of military matters in a work of political philosophy (or science) should not surprise. There are Platonic precedents: in his *Protagoras* (322b5), for example, Plato describes military science as part of political knowledge; in his *Laws* (625e–626b), the art of war is proffered

181 Ostentatious demonstration of Latinity is a feature of some elite C6 writing (e.g. in John the Lydian) in Greek, and our author seems well read in Latin literature: Cicero, Livy, Juvenal and Seneca are amongst those either quoted or alluded to. Latin also remained the main administrative language of the Eastern Empire until the C6. Despite Latin's decline as an administrative language, which John the Lydian saw as the ruin of Rome (*On Magistracies* 2.12), Justinian's legal *Corpus* was overwhelmingly in Latin, unlike most of his later legislation (the *Novels*). Justinian was himself a native Latin speaker, who came from a Latin-speaking province in the Balkans. In fact, the knowledge and use of Latin remained considerable. For the full extent of Latin culture in Constantinople, in this and subsequent reigns, including Corippus, see Averil Cameron (2009). (Corippus' *Iohannis* was apparently delivered in [Latin-speaking] Carthage: *ODB* vol. 1, s.v. 'Corippus'.)

182 Mazzucchi ed. (2002), *Index Auctorum*, 159–61. Homer is the author most quoted, if Plato remains the most influential.

as the most useful of all, since failure in war spells the ruin of society. We even have a treatise, *The General* (*Strategikos*), traditionally ascribed to a first-century CE Platonic philosopher, Onasander, which focuses on the moral qualities of a commander and the nature of generalship rather than on military detail. It has much to say, however, about the conduct of mock battles in training, which derives from Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus* (*Cyropaedia*). It perhaps also informed Maurice's *Strategicon*. Much is made of the use of wooden weapons. Whether our author knew of it remains another unknown, although it was known to John the Lydian in sixth-century Constantinople.¹⁸³

Closer to the time of the *Dialogue*'s composition, however, the address to the Eastern emperor Arcadius (r. 383–408) by the Christian Neoplatonist, and later bishop, Synesius of Cyrene (c.370–c.413), in his *On Ruling* (*De Regno*), deals with contemporary military issues in some detail in a speech meant to influence policy; this also discussed the principles of ideal kingship in terms of, as in the *Dialogue*, the imitation of God.¹⁸⁴ The treatise of Syrianus Magister, *On Strategy*,¹⁸⁵ after summarising the art of government and public administration, proceeds (ch. 5) to the art of strategy 'which is really the most important branch of the entire science of government'. Not least because Justinian's reign was one of almost permanent warfare, it would have departed from the political realism that characterises the *Dialogue* if it had not addressed this subject, notwithstanding the work's wider political concerns. More generally, since 'war and royal power are agreed to be the greatest of all things in the world' a serious work on political science could not but address military matters.¹⁸⁶

In doing this, our author could exploit such precedents as Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, notably in the lessons he draws from Cyrus' practices, and also, possibly, from such other writers as Polybius and Vegetius.¹⁸⁷ Xenophon is

183 Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 2.3.17–20; Onasander, *General* 10.4–6; Maurice, *Strategicon* 12.B.17. See Rance (2000) on mock battles for training. John the Lydian, *On Magistracies* 1.47.

184 Synesius, *On Ruling*, ch. 13ff.

185 Not to be confused with the *Strategicon* attributed to the emperor Maurice. *On Strategy* was formerly attributed to the C6, but a later date, even the C9 seems now more probable: see Rance (2007).

186 Wars. 1.24.6; cf. C. *Summa* 1 in the *Justinianic Code* (529): 'The greatest protection of the state comes from two sources: arms and laws ...'

187 Xenophon c.430–c.355 BCE: Athenian soldier, historian, philosopher and friend of Socrates, wrote his semi-fictional biography of the first Persian king, Cyrus, the *Cyropaedia*. This addressed themes close to the *Dialogue*: how, for example, to become an ideal ruler, how to organise an army, including how to plan a camp, how to train members of the lower orders for

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acknowledged as a great luminary (5.208) and his influence is palpable in this book. (It may be from the *Cyropaedia* that the *Dialogue*'s ideas about mock-battles come.) However, one should not forget that the *Cyropaedia* is perhaps the first work in the 'Mirror for Princes' tradition, and no scholarly work of history – as Cicero knew well.¹⁸⁸ Cyrus himself went on to become a standard rhetorical exemplar, recommended in Menander Rhetor's textbook, for instance; he also appears in Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* to illustrate a point.¹⁸⁹ Neither Polybius nor Vegetius is mentioned by name in what survives in Book 4, although Polybius is mentioned in Cicero's *Republic* (4.3), one of the prime influences on the *Dialogue*, and Mazzucchi believes he has found four allusions to him.¹⁹⁰ And, in Book 6 of his *Histories*, both Polybius' approach and, to some degree, his conclusions anticipate our own author's.

In particular, Polybius argues for the supremacy – and practical efficacy – of the 'mixed' constitution of the Roman republic (that is, before Augustus became the first emperor in 27 BCE) through its combining the best of kingship (in Rome represented by the two most senior magistrates, or consuls), aristocracy (the senate) and democracy (the people) – in ways Cicero later developed in his *Republic*. To this he juxtaposes, in the same book, and in detail, the principles of Roman military organisation to which their hegemony can be attributed.

One cannot be confident that our author knew Vegetius, although John the Lydian mentions him¹⁹¹ – though this may show little more than that he was available, if not actually read, in Constantinople for those, like our author, who understood Latin. Vegetius' preoccupations, however, again like those of our author, include training and the importance of infantry.

office etc. Polybius, c.200–118 BCE, was the great Greek historian of Rome's rise to hegemony in the Mediterranean and the final destruction of Carthage, which he witnessed first-hand when accompanying his friend, the Roman general Scipio Africanus. The latter features as the main speaker in Cicero's *Republic*, itself a model for the *Dialogue*. (Flavius) Vegetius (Renatus) wrote in Latin, between 383–450 (the date is disputed), an influential *Epitome of Military Science*. Although this suffers from its author's apparent lack of a military background, it pays nevertheless great attention both to military training and to the importance of infantry. This, he considered, had been neglected because of a concentration on the importance of the cavalry, which he accordingly passes over.

188 *To his brother, Quintus (ad Quintum fratrem)*, in *Letters to his Friends (Ad Familiares)* 1.8.

189 Menander Rhetor, 2.371.7; Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 1.7.

190 Mazzucchi (2002), 161.

191 John the Lydian, *On Magistracies* 1.47.

This, we have already seen (pp. 23–24 above), was by no means irrelevant archaisms, while a tendency wrongly to underestimate infantry in favour of more glamorous arms – at different periods, knights, tanks or, today, air-power – is not extinct. Machiavelli offers a close parallel for this discussion. In his *Discourses* (2.18), ostensibly a meditation on the same early Roman history to which Menas appeals in the *Dialogue* (4.38), he thought it necessary to argue the case for the continuing importance of infantry in terms of sixteenth-century warfare.¹⁹²

We may, however, be sceptical about some of his precise recommendations. These probably reflect the author's own apparent lack of military experience, and possibly also dependence, suggested by his reference to Cyrus, on rhetorical handbooks as to the qualities of a great general or leader. His suggestion, for instance, that a commander should dash around everywhere in a battle (4.1–6) is unrealistic, even if our author is thinking in terms of Homeric heroes such as Hector. As the emperor Maurice (r. 582–602) observed in his *Strategicon*, 'in actual combat nobody can properly supervise the entire battle ...'¹⁹³ However, what our author says about man-management more generally is pertinent: this includes the commander's need of personal knowledge of officers (or staff more generally), along with their continuous encouragement, followed by appraisal and reward (or punishment). With a little modernisation, some of this material might feature in a modern management handbook on 'leadership'. Of especial interest, however, apart from the concern for the infantry he shared with Maurice and Justinian,¹⁹⁴ is that our author understands the importance of treating non-combatants considerately on pragmatic, rather than merely moral grounds (4.60–69). This remains a matter of the greatest importance, as the late twentieth/early twenty-first century experience of British and US forces in Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan has shown. It was also the subject of Justinianic legislation.¹⁹⁵ Here, once again, it is to Persia that our author ostensibly looks for examples of good practice. He concludes with another, largely pragmatic – yet again persuasive – justification of looking after veterans and their dependents. There is certainly much in the issues

192 The full title of Machiavelli's book is '*Discorsi sulla prima deca di Tito Livio*' (*Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livy*), the great Roman historian's books dealing with the earliest years of the Roman republic. Machiavelli's arguments, however, are both fuller and more persuasive than those of the *Dialogue*.

193 *Strategicon* 2.1.

194 *Strategicon* 12 B proem: *Just. Nov.* 140.

195 See 4.61, n. 54 below for details.

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raised in this part of the *Dialogue*, not least in terms of sources, for military historians, amongst others, to consider in greater depth.

(iii) Book 5 The Ideal Commonwealth: Plato and the Platonic Tradition

A similar debt to the past pervades Book 5, primarily to Plato and his philosophical heirs, now known as Neoplatonists. But he is also indebted to more empirical traditions of Greek political thinking, above all as developed by Cicero, who was himself also strongly influenced by Plato. However, before engaging with the fruitful synthesis of these traditions, a historian coming to this text (or Neoplatonism) for the first time may welcome a *very* brief introductory guide to Platonism – one which also sketches the basic assumptions on which the *Dialogue* rests. (Those familiar with Platonism and its troubled development in late antiquity can go straight to section (iv) below.) However, setting out Plato's thought is rarely straightforward. He tends not to provide a consistent and comprehensive statement of his views, preferring to address separate problems in dialogues whose chronology is sometimes uncertain and where Plato's own (changing) views do not always emerge with clarity or consistency, even in a single work.¹⁹⁶ Nevertheless, so far as his political philosophy and its metaphysical foundations are concerned (especially in the *Republic*, which is basic to our *Dialogue*), one can perhaps start by posing the question of what makes a thing, in the very broadest sense, what it is? How can we define it? In our everyday lives, we encounter a great variety of individual things, people, events, qualities or indeed states and constitutions. Because nothing we encounter is wholly unlike anything else, we can classify these 'particulars' in terms of 'universal' concepts which we can then use in all sorts of ways: for example, from our acquaintance with individual men, we can move on to generalise about men as a class or even 'Man'. We can ask what do all men have in common? What is it in virtue of that they are men? Or, from thinking a man, an action, or a thing is, for example, 'good', we can ask what 'goodness' means more generally; how does it apply in such an apparently wide range of contexts? The whole of the *Republic*, in fact,

196 For a good general introduction to Plato generally, see Fine (2008). For the 'classic' introduction to the *Republic*, Annas (1981). For Plato's politics more generally, Schofield (2006). (Sir Kenneth Dover's introduction to his ed. of the *Symposium* [Cambridge, 1980] also contains a brilliant, short and straightforward summary of some of Plato's key ideas, notably his 'Theory of Forms'.)

offers an extended answer to the related question, 'what is justice?'

Plato, however, was unsatisfied with apparent inconsistencies in at least some of these 'universals' in our everyday discourse. They gave rise to imprecision, uncertainty, even, he believed, logical contradictions. He considered that there is something 'beyond', or 'underlying' them which 'really exists' and makes them what they are – be it a man, dog, goodness, action, state or anything else – independent of our changing perceptions, misperceptions, judgements and manipulations. However, he believed that the human mind (or soul) can, by systematic and communicable *reasoning*, obtain definite and certain knowledge of these real, unchanging, underlying entities: the so-called 'Forms' (*eide*), or 'Ideas' (*ideai*), of which the things we perceive are, in some sense, imperfect copies. This true knowledge (or science) is *episteme*. Propositions founded on experience, on the other hand, and ultimately on sensory perception, are merely 'opinions' (*doxai*), which may be well founded ('correct opinion', or *orthē doxa*) or not; but in both these cases they lack the certitude of true knowledge. Thus we can see, with our eyes, an object of a kind that we may want to call 'beautiful', or indeed 'a bed'. But the Idea (or 'Form') of beauty ('the Beautiful' – *to kalon*), or of 'the Bed', this we can only perceive, in Plato's metaphor, by the 'eye of the soul' – that is, by the exercise of reason. Plato goes, however, one step further: he believes that (the Form of) the Good is at the core of the universe, and is the ultimate explanation of its organisation and how all its constituents, including all the Forms, function together. Thus, for him, the 'Idea (or Form) of Good' is the 'cause of knowledge (*episteme*) and truth'.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, he claims that the relation of what is known to the Good is comparable to the relation of what is seen to the sun, which not only makes what is seen visible but also brings it to life and growth.¹⁹⁸ It is ultimately because the philosopher has, after a lengthy and intellectually rigorous education and through the practice of virtues that bring his passions and emotions under the rule of reason, progressed 'upwards' from this world of opinion (and the senses) to the world of knowledge represented by the Forms (and that of the Good in particular), that he (and also, for Plato in the *Republic*, she) is able to rule in the ideal Republic that Plato outlined.

The Platonic tradition developed from this starting-point. It would take us too far from the *Dialogue* to examine it in detail. Nor need we. The

197 *Rep.* 6.508d.

198 *Rep.* 6.509b.

Dialogue rests overwhelmingly on Plato's *Republic*, supplemented by his *Laws* (and Cicero's *Republic*), while a feature of the later Platonic tradition is the absence of a concern for politics for their own sake. In so far as later Platonists concern themselves with the 'political' virtues necessary for private and community moral 'health', it is because political virtue can assist their 'ascent' to the higher levels of divine life. This is only natural, since political virtue to some degree reflects these higher intellectual and divine virtues. He who possesses the latter can, however, 'descend' to express these higher virtues in political life, and thereby imitate God. This is the situation of the *Dialogue*'s ruler. However, the work of Plotinus (205–69),¹⁹⁹ universally acknowledged as the greatest of the 'Neoplatonic' philosophers – they saw themselves simply as 'Platonists' – had refined and systematised Plato's thinking in ways that form the metaphysical backdrop to the *Dialogue*.

For Plato, the world was essentially twofold: our physical world of the senses, on the one hand, and a world of Forms, on the other, which provided the archetypal patterns of that physical world, with the Form of the Good having a special, if ill-defined role. But Plotinus was not to be satisfied with this dichotomy and the philosophical problems to which it gave rise. Plato's demiurge (creator) had, according to his late, and extremely influential, dialogue the *Timaeus*, modelled our world on an eternal form. There was accordingly a need to bring together this creator, on the one hand, with the world of Forms, on the other. This in turn required some antecedent first principle to give unity to this amalgam, thereby producing a more systematic metaphysic. The theistic ontology of the *Timaeus* also needed to be harmonised with that of the *Republic*, where the Good presides over all other entities, including the Forms.²⁰⁰ Plotinus thus refined Plato's concepts of the Form (or Idea) of the Good (which also represents ultimate value or the sum of values), and the Forms (and the Soul) more generally into his own succession of three principles: the transcendental and ineffable 'One' (whose intellectual genesis we have just observed),²⁰¹ the 'Intellect' and the 'Soul'.

Plotinus regarded these as a hierarchy of distinct entities – real beings (or *hypostases*) in their own right, with each also generating its successor, while remaining within it. Thus 'Intellect' emanates from the 'One', who

199 All dates for Neoplatonic philosophers are CE.

200 I am grateful to Mark Edwards for this concise formulation.

201 This is often referred to as 'God', but without Christian connotations.

remains within it, while ‘Intellect’ in turn generates ‘Soul’ (and individual souls) in which it also remains. (If this seems odd, consider the original Platonic ‘Form of the Bed’. This is an independent, separate, transcendental entity in its own right, but which is somehow instantiated in every individual, physical dog we feed, pet and take for walks.) Matter remains outside these three levels of the higher realm, and its combination with Soul, or rather souls, in mankind leads to conflict from which philosophy can help us escape.²⁰² For Plotinus, the central task was and remained the ‘search for the nature of man, his soul and his destiny’ with the aim of enabling individual souls to be reunited with ‘their father, God’, which (or whom) they have forgotten ‘even though they are parts which come from his higher world and altogether belong to it’.²⁰³ This search was accompanied, in such successors as Porphyry (234–c.305), Iamblichus (c.245–c.325) and Proclus (c.410–85), with increasing levels of metaphysical elaboration and systematisation, as well as by a growing emphasis on religious ritual as a complement, or alternative to the intellectual ascent of philosophy.

By late antiquity, Platonism was in the ascendant; other schools of philosophy, such as the once-influential Stoics, Epicureans or Sceptics, were of diminishing importance, although efforts continued to demonstrate the unity of approach of Plato with Aristotle. In practice, by the sixth century, philosophy was not confined to professional philosophers in the great centres of Athens or Alexandria but involved a widely spread intelligentsia across the Eastern Empire: take, for example, the young administrator and antiquarian John the Lydian, who spent a ‘gap year’ in Constantinople before entering the Praetorian Prefecture, listening to lectures by a Platonic philosopher.²⁰⁴ But not only him: Pagans (and Platonism, in the higher reaches of society) seem to have been far more numerous than it was (and, in some circles, still is) customary to admit,²⁰⁵ while late antique philosophy has recently become a subject of lively academic interest, studied for its intrinsic philosophical importance and not summarily dismissed as

202 For a short, lucid introduction to Neoplatonism, see Smith (2004). More advanced, Edwards (2006). For Neoplatonic *political* philosophy, including the *Dialogue*, O’Meara (2003) is essential. (His 2002 article is an extended version of his comments on the *Dialogue* in 2003, 171–84.) This introduction is particularly indebted to these writers, although all pass over the influence of Cicero in the *Dialogue*, on whom see below. Also for the *Timaean*, see Sedley (2007). For Plotinus, see also Gerson (1996).

203 Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.1.1, 1ff. Smith (2004), 5–6.

204 John the Lydian, *On Magistracies* 3.26.

205 Kaldellis (2004), esp. ch. 3; Bell (forthcoming).

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obscurantist metaphysics or mysticism.²⁰⁶ However, owing to Justinian's campaign to enforce Christian uniformity across the whole empire, they were the victims of generic imperial legislation against 'Hellenism', as well as of more targeted measures, including whatever was actually done – the details are obscure²⁰⁷ – to break the Platonic School at Athens. The School at Alexandria only escaped in the short term, thanks to a 'shameful deal' – though even here, the prominent Neoplatonist philosopher Hypatia had been torn to pieces on the streets of Alexandria in 415 by Christian militants (*parabalani*),²⁰⁸ possibly at the instigation of the patriarch, Cyril.²⁰⁹

Also, in 545/6, 'at the encouragement of our humble self', writes the well-connected Bishop John of Ephesus, the authorities, presumably Justinian, were persuaded to 'torture', until they denounced each other, 'famous persons and others – professors of literature, professors of rhetoric, lawyers and physicians'. Book-burning and further assaults on Pagans would come later, in 562, just before the re-dedication of that monument of Justinianic and Christian triumphalism, Hagia Sophia.²¹⁰ It had thus become dangerous to be a Platonist, at least of a non-Christian flavour, under Justinian. It is not hard to surmise why our anonymous author may have chosen anonymity: as Plato had put it in his *Republic* (6.496d–e), nearly nine hundred years before, to be echoed in late antiquity by Simplicius and Olympiodorus, 'a man who has fallen in with wild beasts ... keeps quiet and minds his own business'. More poignant, though hardly inexplicable, is the lament of the philosopher, Syrianus, who became head of the Academy in Athens in 431/2, that the Christians 'had pulled down and trailed on the ground the Divine that is in us'.²¹¹

206 Such scholars include R. Sorabji and his collaborators, P. Athanassiadi, D. O'Meara and G. Fowden. For an overview of philosophy in the Justinianic period, see Wildenberg (2005).

207 Although Watts (2006) is a good guide. Also p. 33 above.

208 Technically, ecclesiastical hospital orderlies, but also serving as the patriarch's ecclesiastical militia. The nature of the 'shameful deal' (Damascius, *Philosophical History* fr. 118B) is uncertain. It may have been an undertaking, Sorabji (2005) has speculated, by the School, which Christians also attended, not to practise Pagan ritual, in return for a continuation of municipal funding.

209 For the murder of Hypatia, Dzielska (1995). Dzielska also notes other violence by the *parabalani* at, for instance, the Council of Ephesus II (449). This murder is a useful reminder that active persecution by Christians was not an innovation of Justinian.

210 *CJ* 1.5 for legislation against Pagans etc.; Ps. Dionysius of Tel Mahre (for John of Ephesus), 71; Mal., *Chronicle* 491 (for the 562 persecution). *SH* 11ff. both for the persecution of Pagans and the benefits of feigning Christianity. See MacMullen (1997), esp. ch. 1, for an overview of unrelenting Christian attempts throughout late antiquity to extirpate religious deviance of all kinds, including Paganism. Also Kaldellis (2004), with sources.

211 Syrianus, in Damascius, *Philosophical History* (ed. Zintzen) fr. 32.

(iv) The Nature of ‘Political Science’ in the *Dialogue*

The argument in Book 5 of the *Dialogue* can be hard to follow, hence the synopsis of the argument that I have inserted below at its beginning on page 143. Hence too why what follows concentrates on bringing out the central ideas, rather than the somewhat confusing order in which they appear. The metaphysic outlined above, however, is at the heart of the *Dialogue* as we have it. Moreover, it is through God’s goodness (5.194) that the human race is able to return from its place of exile here below, that is, here on earth, to our rightful home on high by means of political science (*politike episteme*).²¹² More specifically, political science arises in view of the human condition (5.175–82), where we find ourselves mid-way between the rational and the irrational. Both transcendent intellect and nature in isolation know peace, since they are unmixed with each other; the human race is, however, torn between them as soul is combined with matter in this corporeal universe, and is accordingly drawn both up to the divine life of the intellect and down towards nature. Here divine providence steps in: it offers us both ‘dialectical science’, which concerns what is incorporeal and intelligible to reason, and ‘political science’, which relates to the corporeal and concerns political action.

Now this political knowledge (or science), relating originally to the body, is embodied in the political virtues – practical wisdom, courage, moderation and justice²¹³ – which ensure the proper functioning of the soul. Of these virtues, justice is as fundamental for the *Dialogue* as it was for Plato (or Agapetus).²¹⁴ Thus, subordinating the soul to the rule of reason constitutes an indispensable first step towards, and is itself subordinate to, a higher union with the divine – a union that also calls for the exercise of those other, higher theoretical sciences, of which ‘theology’ (literally, the ‘science of god’), also called ‘dialectic’, is the highest. In terms of the model prescribed in the *Dialogue*, this subordination also provides good order in their individual earthly lives for those, a minority, capable of it. This, one should note, also underpins and legitimises a conspicuously hierarchical earthly society. This, in turn, affords a necessary pre-condition for our return to our divine homeland:

212 What follows is indebted to O’Meara (2003), 175ff. On the ‘return of the soul’, see also Smith (2004), ch. 5. The language of ‘ascent’, ‘descent’, ‘return’ etc. is to be interpreted metaphorically.

213 *Enneads* 12.1.17–21 (Armstrong’s translation).

214 See e.g. 5.16, 5.138, and 5.189. Also Fotiou (1981), 537ff.

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For political science and the man who is equal to it claims to make a just and harmonious city not in a single way, but by benefiting and saving all the citizens, not by making them all such as he is. He will save some, who are naturally receptive, by the sharing of political science, others by <inducing> correct opinion, others by the imparting of trust, others by habituation to a just life, others by fear of the state laws, and others through the imitation of domestic well-being ... For universal reason and law have ordained that the lot of each is determined thus and that people differ from each other in knowledge and other virtues, and also in the quality of their nature. (5.189–92)

As to what, in practice, political science prescribes, we learn that it includes ‘laws’, here the special laws of imperial rule (*nomoi idikoi tes basileias*); ‘doctrines’, or the principles that dictate what are appropriate actions (*dogmata*); and ‘practices’ (*epitedeumata*), which actually work (5.13ff.). Our author uses medicine as an analogy for understanding how these ideas can be applied in practice (as did Agapetus when explaining his taxation policies [ch. 16]). The five laws given in the surviving text cover the selection of the emperor (or king), the constitution of a ruling elite of ‘optimates’, the choice of religious authorities and the higher officers of state, and the protection of the laws (5.17ff.). However, we have also been told, by this point in the *Dialogue*, that the essence of imperial (or kingly) rule is nothing other than the imitation of God (5.1ff.). This returns us to the thought-world our author shares, amongst many others, with the Eusebius of the *Tricennial Oration* and Agapetus. But what does this entail?

(v) Imitating God

Two features of the divine nature are relevant in defining the nature of such imitation: god’s perfect knowledge and his providence or care for what is lower. This is a virtue, *philanthropia*, that, together with its synonyms, also recurs frequently in Agapetus and late antique political theorising more generally. It also serves as an exemplary trait of rulers that Menander advises his readers to extol.²¹⁵ But neither explains how imperial rule actually imitates the divine in terms of the political virtues or indeed of anything else. Plato understood the difficulty. He asked how exactly were the philosopher-rulers to model their city according to a divine form: what is it to copy a Platonic Form (of, say, justice) in the exercise of their rule? As O’Meara points out, the problem is even tougher for Neoplatonists: how, asks Plotinus, can the

²¹⁵ Menander Rhetor, 2.375. Synonyms include ‘doing good’ (*eupoia*) and ‘good deeds’ (*agatha erga*). See further p. 38 above.

legendary Cretan king, Minos, make laws in the image of his communion with 'Zeus' (that is, the One) when the latter is ineffable and beyond determinate being?²¹⁶

The *Dialogue* also sees the problem: 'Menas' distinguishes what may be discovered scientifically, by *reason*, and what can be found by *correct opinion*, guided by divine creation (5.8). This is not an entirely satisfactory explanation, even if sufficient to take the argument forward when it occurs. Our author appears to recognise this, and later supplements it with passages that describe an ascent of the intellect, going from 'opinion' (*doxa*) and reasoning using hypotheses, up to 'science' (*episteme*) – ascending, in effect, to a vision of the truth resembling the Form of the Good (5.116ff.). The intellect, in its ascent, enquires into the first cause of all things to discover that reality is hierarchical in a structure in which the ordering of each level reflects the one above; each thus shares in the beneficence of the 'Good' at the apex. Thus, from a transcendent first cause flow down the various intermediate and intelligible levels of reality, until finally we land at our own everyday world. Here, on his return, moulded and inspired by his vision of the super-sensible intelligible world, the emperor (or king) is the principle of order and the likeness to the transcendent 'Good'. And, after discovering the first cause, he will wish to govern men in imitation of it. This is essentially the way in which, in his famous analogy, the philosopher-ruler of Plato's *Republic* ascends from the cave of earthly illusion to the light of the sun, the Form of the Good itself, returning eventually to govern the state.²¹⁷

In short, the ruler, inspired by his initiation into the nature of the intelligible universe, will accordingly rule as the 'imitator of God' – a likeness, or status, he will have earned through his laborious philosophical ascent to the higher intelligible realms, and not simply one bestowed on him, as for Agapetus, by God (ch. 1). One cannot adequately express, or indeed distinguish, the ineffable divine virtues in words (5.130ff.). But in so far as we can apply approximate descriptions, such a divinely inspired ruler will be *good*, a paradigm of virtue for his subjects, and ruling in their, not his own, interest. He will be *wise*, ruling through a hierarchy of mediating ranks, creating a harmonious political structure. He will display *power*, showing courage, practical wisdom, benevolence, etc. He will also be *just* both internally, in terms of the internal correct governance of his own passions, and externally, in assigning every social rank its due. (There is no liberal

216 *Rep.* 6.500e; Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.9.7.

217 *Rep.*, Bks 6–7. For a fuller analysis, see Annas (1981), ch. 10.

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idea that justice entails treating everyone equally.) In this way, political knowledge will be modelled on a transcendent paradigm comprising both *scientific knowledge* of intelligible principles and *correct opinion* concerning the visible world, both of which derive ultimately from a super-intelligible first cause (5.119ff.). We have already seen, in 5.189, how the philosophically educated ruler will save all the citizens, albeit not in the same way. These virtues correspond closely, we recall, to the characteristics attributed by Agapetus to the ideal emperor; though without, in the latter case, any formalised metaphysical underpinning.²¹⁸

(vi) The *Dialogue* and Sixth-Century Politics – the Search for Legitimacy

But how does all this relate to the political reality of Justinian's reign? Were this work confined to Platonic (or Neoplatonic) generalities, it would remain of interest as probably the only surviving exemplar of Neoplatonic political theory outside the Arab world.²¹⁹ However, it is of intrinsic importance owing to the author's awareness of contemporary political (and military) issues, his determination to apply his theorising to their resolution, and in the way his differences from Agapetus' *Advice* illustrate contrasting intellectual, social and political positions within intellectual circles in Constantinople: this is especially so in regard to their understanding of 'the imitation of God', attitudes to the poor and, as we shall see, popular consent and law. He also derived inspiration from that other tradition represented by Cicero. Thus, he is rightly aware that candidates who satisfy his demanding criteria of uniting political science with kingship may be hard to find (5.46). He also believes that the main source of political evil is precisely the lack of such political knowledge, as defined, on the part of those who seek supreme power in their own not others' interest, and who do so by a range of illegitimate or criminal means. It is hard to imagine he did not have Justin I and his successor in mind.

His solution (5.49ff.), at one level, embodies a practical compromise whereby, without betraying his fundamental Platonism, a candidate for

218 For a lengthy list of similarities between the *Dialogue*'s emperor and that of Agapetus, see Mazzucchi and Matelli (1985), 215. Most are rhetorical, e.g. the emperor as helmsman of the state, as custodian of the laws, as a father to his children. Arguably more important, and explained below in sections (vi)–(viii), are the differences, notably the constitutional constraints, under which the *Dialogue*'s emperor operates.

219 For al Farabi, see O'Meara (2003), ch. 14.

imperial office is subject to a complicated selection procedure, involving nominations by the heads of all the social classes – including the people (*demos*). He ultimately receives divine sanction through a religiously conducted drawing of lots. This procedure is designed to weed out unsuitable candidates, identify a ruler with the right qualities, but also one endowed with legitimacy through the active participation of the leaders of *all* social classes in nominating candidates – even if the latter are to be confined to optimates – and, of course, divine blessing. Complex though this procedure seems, it is simpler than the selection procedure, also involving a sequence of electoral colleges and lotteries to produce a consensus candidate, employed to select the Doges (Dukes) of Venice. This lasted from 1268 to the end of the Republic in 1797. It should not, therefore, be unthinkingly dismissed as impractical.²²⁰ It is certainly preferable to the manoeuvrings of high officials, sections of the army and the circus factions that surrounded the selection in 518 of Justin I, or even the (peaceful) *coup* that wafted Justin II to power.²²¹ No less striking, both in terms of political realism and retaining confidence in the imperial institution, are the arrangements proposed for ensuring a peaceful, orderly transition from one emperor to another – the first time, it seems, that any ancient writer had discussed this issue.²²²

It also recognises, as did Justinian through his legal, religious, social and military policies, the imperative for a successful emperor of having his authority recognised as *legitimate*. This the *Dialogue* conceptualises as being both ‘lawful’ (*nomimos*) and ‘just’ (*dikaios*). In the emphasis placed on legitimacy, and its essential link *both* with law *and* morality, this treatment of the concept (5.46ff.) bears comparison with Max Weber’s classic analysis.²²³ This provides additional evidence not merely of the perceptiveness and analytical subtlety of the *Dialogue*’s author, but also of the shaky foundations of Justinian’s ascendancy; this included opposition from within

220 Norwich (1977), 166ff. In its combination of monarchy (the Doge), tightly constrained within complex, aristocratically dominated, legally based institutions, there are resemblances between the Venetian constitution and that of the *Dialogue*. In Venice also, the popular element was in practice minimal.

221 Vasiliev (1950) for full details of Justin I’s accession, with sources. Corippus, Bk. 1, for an account of the accession of Justin II with Averil Cameron’s comments *ad loc*; also Michael Whitby (2000a), 86–87.

222 Mazzucchi and Matelli (1982), 216.

223 Weber (1978), 212ff. Agapetus gropes towards a similar point. He explains (ch. 1) that the emperor’s rule is both just and in accordance with the law, although, in ch. 36, he scarcely distinguishes between securing ‘legitimacy’ and ‘goodwill’. Nor does he set this understanding in any institutional framework.

the elite and elsewhere, of which, as we shall see below, Paul the Silentary's poem constitutes further evidence. It may also reflect the trauma of the factional disorders, whether the Nika riot or the other serious disturbances of the late 550s and beyond, to which the *Dialogue* devotes such space and passion (5.97–114).

Perhaps we should also see in the *Dialogue*'s proposed electoral process the best, indeed the only, example of the 'dicaearchan' constitution, so described by its author, according to Photius, which he claimed embodied a 'form of constitution beyond those spoken of in antiquity'.²²⁴ The word itself is not used in our surviving text, and it would be easier to work out what Photius was claiming if we knew what 'Dicaearchan' or 'dicaearchan' meant. Etymologically, the latter simply means 'rule in accordance with justice', and this interpretation is not without followers. The former, however, implies a reference to the third-century BCE philosopher and polymath of the Aristotelian School, Dicaearchus of Messana (modern Messina) in Sicily, the presumed author of a treatise called *Tripoliticus*, which Cicero mentions favourably in his sequel to his *Republic*, the *Laws*.²²⁵ Of this work only fragments survive, but it seems to have propounded a theory of the mixed constitution – monarchy, aristocracy, democracy – later developed by Polybius and Cicero. This seems to characterise the constitution alluded to by Photius, although he appears to attribute some unspecified novelty to the arrangements proposed. But before we can resolve these issues, we must address the larger question of what the *Dialogue* owed to Cicero and indeed contemporary practice, not least in relation to the accession of emperors.

(vii) The Influence of Cicero

Again, the answer is hard to determine: we have barely a quarter, if that, of the *Dialogue*; of the six books of Cicero's *Republic*, large chunks are missing even from the best preserved Books 1–3; Books 4 and 5 have pretty much vanished; what survives of Book 6 is largely confined to the so-called *Dream of Scipio*, in which the hero receives a vision of the heavens, Platonic in its general character. But from what does survive, we have no reason to believe that Cicero discussed military matters, although the *Dialogue* (4.53) cites his *Tusculan Disputations* as evidence for Roman infantry always

224 Also the view of Fotiou (1981), 539ff.

225 *On Laws* 3.14.

carrying their own weapons and supplies for five days. Moreover, where both works overlap – in, for instance, their shared emphasis on the ruler's acting as a father to his people (5.132; *Rep.* 1.35.54), or how harmony in song, or a lyre, is like concord in a state (5.136; *Rep.* 2.42.69) – such parallels could as easily be rhetorical commonplaces or echoes of Plato as a debt to the Roman statesman. Yet Cicero clearly meant a great deal to our author: there are numerous allusions to him in what survives (4.53, 5.48, 5.63, 5.64, 5.132, 5.138 and 5.209). We also have our author's promise, in the summary of contents at the start of Book 5, of a comparison, sadly lost, of the *Republics* of Plato and Cicero.

What seems the strongest influence, however, though Cicero is not cited as a precedent, is our author's determination to combine *both* 'pure' political philosophy *and* political realism. Although Plato eventually got round to this – his later dialogue, *The Laws*, modifies the approach in his *Republic* in the interests of pragmatism – Cicero is explicit about combining the 'two methods'. That such a synthesis was possible reflects the sympathy for Plato evident, despite the criticisms, in Cicero. The result is to combine elements of Platonic political philosophy, 'which is quite unsuited to men's actual lives and habits', with a 'definite example or model'. In Cicero, this comprises a history and analysis of the Roman state.²²⁶ Our author, however, does not offer any similarly fundamental criticism of Plato of this kind, at least in what survives, although he is keen to relate his work to contemporary realities. But if he had, it would be a perfect example of the kind of 'just', but unspecified, 'criticism' of Plato that Photius reported as a feature of our *Dialogue*.

Against this background, Behr (1974) made two important suggestions about Cicero's influence: first, that the new folio he discovered (p. 9 above) apparently contains a genuine quotation (5.64) from the mostly lost Book 5 of Cicero's *Republic*. This seems to have dealt with the administration of justice and the role of the ideal statesman. In the *Dialogue*, Menas is here reported as saying that Thomas is agreeing with Cicero when he says that 'the whole of the imperial concern should be with the selection of ten optimates, who would suffice, since they were competent, to select other men whom they would use to administer the state'. This accords well with the section of the *Dialogue* dealing with the third heading in the opening summary (i.e. that belonging to the *Dialogue*, not my own synopsis), namely the goal of imperial rule and what it needs in terms of laws etc. Behr rightly

226 Quotations from Cicero, *Rep.* 2.22.11.

speculates, though without going into detail, that the wider section in which it is embedded is also indebted to Cicero. There is certainly here a Ciceronian echo in the *Dialogue*'s conception of an emperor who is concerned with 'only the structures of government and the general principles of public policy' (5.58). Even allowing for the bracketed passage below,²²⁷ this closely reflects Cicero's vision of the ideal statesman, who:

... of course, should be given almost no other duties than this (for in this one are almost all the others) – of improving and examining himself continually, urging others to contemplate him, and furnishing in himself ... a mirror to his fellow citizens by reason of the supreme excellence of his life and character. (*Rep.* 2.42.69)

Behr's second suggestion concerns the sections that follow his 'new' folio (5.86–95). These, for him, constitute an extended paraphrase or even quotation from Cicero. They continue to address the issue of what 'laws, doctrines and practices' should apply in the *Dialogue*'s ideal state. In them, Behr believes, lies the answer to the question of what is meant by the 'Dicaearchian' character of the *Dialogue*. The text distinguishes here between the optimates and magistrates, even though elsewhere (e.g. 5.63–64, 5.79) the latter are to be understood as a subset of the former, with the emperor appointing the highest 'Ten', in effect a 'cabinet'. They in turn appoint the lower levels who superintend the 'guilds' (*tagmata*) whose character is largely economic. For Behr, this alleged dichotomy between magistrates and optimates clearly distinguishes between democratic institutions (the magistrates) and aristocratic ones (the optimates). Interpretation is not helped by the deplorable state of the MS at this point.

But Behr's conclusion still does not follow. Imperial appointment of magistrates, in the *Dialogue*, represents a fundamental departure from Republican Roman practice, as in Cicero's day for instance, where the magistrates were *elected*, albeit from members of the Senate.²²⁸ There is no sense (with one very important exception discussed below) of what we find, for instance, in Polybius' classic analysis of the Roman constitution in the second century BCE: namely that a most important part of the prerogatives

227 This presumably does *not* mean that the ideal statesman does nearly everything in the state, otherwise it would be an unqualified monarchy. It indicates rather that his exemplary life provides a model of universal application to all the functions of the state, including those left to others. It provides, therefore, an excellent model for the *Dialogue*, whether or not Cicero was less inclined than our author to let his ideal statesman delegate responsibilities.

228 Except in the case of the most junior magistrates, the *quaestors*, who became senators on the expiry of their year's term of office.

of the people (*demos*) is the right to confer honours (or office).²²⁹ By Justinian's day, magistrates – including imperial governorships – had long been imperial appointments; in provincial cities, local magistracies had been in decline for very many years and there imperial officials increasingly worked in collaboration with un-elected local notables and bishops.²³⁰

At most, we can only see the arrangements that the *Dialogue* is here recommending not as distinguishing between aristocratic and democratic elements in the constitution, but as distinguishing between optimates acting, on the one hand, as a class with a supervisory and nominating role, or, on the other, individually as magistrates and officials (and appointees, direct or indirect, of the emperor) who need watching. The superiority given here and in what follows to the optimates' supervisory role – and their importance in day-to-day administration as individual magistrates – is consistent with our author's known sympathies, and his desire to curtail the influence of the emperor – and also, of course, to further good governance.

This resembles the way Cicero's ideal statesman would be constrained by the limited role seemingly proposed for him. Both authors grasped the importance of a single political leader: for the *Dialogue*, the imperial institution was a given; for Cicero, writing as the Roman Republic drifted towards anarchy in the first half of the first century BCE – his *Republic* was published in 51 BCE – eventual autocracy was a real possibility. Within twenty years, the Roman 'Principate' was a reality, with all power effectively vested in Julius Caesar's heir, Octavian, soon to become Augustus. Whatever Cicero's personal views on the desirability of such an outcome or on the identity of its incumbent, both he and the author of the *Dialogue* had good reason to fear an over-mighty ruler, actual or potential.²³¹ For both also, the wisdom and moral character of the ruler were of the first importance – as also were legal constraints.²³² Given our own author's attitude to the emperor, described in section (viii) below, and his wider concerns for the interests of his own class,

229 Polybius, *Histories* 6.14.

230 Liebeschuetz (2001), Part 1, for the end of classical urban politics.

231 Miriam Griffin has cautioned me against too readily assuming that, for Cicero, the state should only contain one ideal statesman. That is, however, the drift of the (surviving) text – it is in his *On the Orator* (1.211) that the phrase 'helmsman (or controller) of the state' appears in the plural: see Powell (1994), 19ff. for the arguments. For the *Dialogue*, which assumes an imperial framework, the issue does not arise.

232 It does not matter, for our purposes, whether Cicero was actively canvassing a 'hegemonic' role for, say, the C1 BCE political magnate Pompey, or simply trying to limit the damage the ascendancy of any potentate might cause. For further historical background to the *Republic* and its author's much-discussed intentions, see Zetzel's commentary (1995), 2–29.

it is unsurprising that he should be responsive to Cicero's approach to the role and authority of his 'ideal statesman' and adapt it to meet his needs.

But we remain unclear about the extent to which the *Dialogue* is 'Dicaearchan'. There is a clear, if constrained, role for the emperor; the optimates are patently very important. But where is the 'democratic' element in the constitution? It may, of course, have featured in a now-lost book. But there is nothing in what survives to suggest this. On the contrary. The most important 'popular' element in government in the sixth-century empire was provided by the factions. Their power was demonstrated, for example, in their ability to force the dismissal of unpopular ministers (such as Tribonian and John the Cappadocian in 529);²³³ in successful protest, in 553, against modifications of the rate of exchange between the gold and copper coinage to the disadvantage of the latter (which was of particular importance to the lower classes); or in protests against rises in the price of bread (556).²³⁴ Yet our author, with factional violence chiefly in mind, regards the factions as an abomination (5.103ff.).

One would scarcely expect a Platonist to be any kind of democrat. Plato, after all, was no friend to ancient Athenian democracy, and all the *Dialogue* has to say about the selection, including the eugenic breeding, of future optimates and the hierarchy of authority and government they operate from the emperor downwards, is overwhelmingly Platonic in character (5.23ff.). Many of the specific arrangements, as well as the overarching metaphysical schema in which the *Dialogue*'s recommendations are situated, recall rather the contemporary Neoplatonic vision of heaven and the Church in which authority cascades down from God through the celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchies of angels and bishops, as described by the roughly contemporary Neoplatonic theologian, Ps-Dionysius the Areopagite.²³⁵ In fact, in the surviving portions of the *Dialogue*, the only unambiguously democratic element in his proposed constitution is the popular involvement in the selection of a new emperor (5.49ff.). The fundamental philosophical importance of this, which goes beyond administrative convenience or pragmatism, now starts to emerge.

We come best to see how a 'democratic' element enters if we read the sections of the *Dialogue* dealing with the importance of public opinion

²³³ Wars 1.24.

²³⁴ Mal., *Chronicle* 486, 488.

²³⁵ Ps. Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*; O'Meara (2003), 159–63. Since for Ps. Dionysius, secular government is excluded from these arrangements, we must rely on an analogy between the lay and ecclesiastical authorities.

through *both* Platonic and Ciceronian eyes. Negatively, it is clear that, for our author, such typically democratic practices as making speeches and similar manifestations of popular views are irrelevant, even harmful, because, he implies, they have nothing to do with (Platonic) political science (5.42–43). No surprises here. But that is far from denying either the critically important popular dimension to the government of the state, or the need to root good government in social and political reality. As Cicero put it: ‘A republic is public property²³⁶ ... an assemblage of men in large numbers associated in an agreement with respect to justice and partnership for the common good’ (*Rep.* 1.25.39). Such a coming-together is not the result of individual human weakness, but of ‘a certain inborn sociability’.

As for Aristotle, who famously observed that ‘man is a political animal’,²³⁷ so for Cicero: the state is a natural institution, with its own laws. It is of secondary importance what form the government takes ‘provided no elements of greed or injustice are mixed with it’, although it is equally clear that Cicero, like our own author, is no enthusiast for popular government. The essential is that the regime must rest on consensus. Thus ‘Scipio’, speaking for Cicero:

Kingship is ... by far the best of the three primary forms [*sc.* monarchy, aristocracy, democracy]. But a moderate and balanced form of government which is a combination of the three simple good forms is preferable even to the kingship. For there should be a supreme and royal element in the state, some power ought also to be granted to the leading citizens, and certain matters should be left to the judgement and desires of the masses. (*Rep.* 1.45.69)

More illuminating still is Cicero’s contention that

For just as in the music of harps and flutes or in the voices of singers a certain harmony must be observed in the different notes ... and just as a perfect agreement and harmony arise from the proportionate blending of different notes, so also is a state made harmonious by agreement among dissimilar elements, a fair and reasonable blending of the highest, lowest and middle classes (*ordines*) as if they were musical notes. What the musicians call harmony in song is concord in a state, the strongest and best bond of permanent union in any commonwealth. Such concord can in no way be brought about without the aid of justice. (*Rep.* 2.42.69)

236 In Latin, *res publica res populi* – a play on words hard to catch exactly (cf. Keyes: ‘a commonwealth is public property’). Cicero is subverting for rhetorical effect a legal distinction familiar to his audience between *res publica* and *res privata*: very roughly, between public property / affairs and private property / affairs. See Schofield (1995), 63ff. For the remainder of this and other extracts from Cicero, the translation is by Keyes, Loeb (1957).

237 Aristotle, *Politics* 1.1253a.

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What is remarkable is how our author combines such thinking with his concept of philosopher-kingship in defining imperial rule as ‘The imitation of god amongst men, that is imperial rule: what is given from God to emperors should be embedded in the state amongst men both justly and in public law’ (5.45). From this follows his previously noted definition of ‘legitimacy’, in terms of what is ‘lawful’ and ‘just’, through an analysis that combines, at one point (5.48), the views of Plato and Cicero – both named – in a single sentence. The former involves accepting the imperial authority offered to him as a public duty – as a result of a selection process (5.49) in which *all the classes of the state have taken part*; the latter, justice, requires the assent of the ruled. We have, therefore, a twofold conception of the imperial office. This was well summed up earlier by ‘Menas’ (5.17) when he explained that the imperial power will go to the man ‘who is equal to it and may ... justly receive it when it is given by god and offered by the citizens’ (5.17).

We are thus presented with a projected constitution which is, first, ‘Dicaearchian’, in that the three main social classes are involved, though clearly not all are of equal weight; secondly, our proposed constitution *also* satisfies the Platonic requirement for philosopher-kingship. Combining both approaches ‘introduces’, in Photius’ words, ‘another form of constitution beyond those spoken of in antiquity’.²³⁸ We may justifiably admire the innovative way in which our writer combines the elevated Platonic and more down-to-earth Ciceronian approaches. But this is not theorising for theorising’s sake. It has definite political implications. For example, a notable feature of these arrangements is that they impose constraints on the imperial power, while boosting that of the *aristocracy*, or ‘optimates’, who are also given a clearly defined role in the governance of the state. The (sensible) proposals for arranging for the retirement of emperors or the nomination of their successors, while they still lived, would have a similar effect (5.160ff.).

But note here also the emphasis laid on the law as governing not only the election, but also the *conduct* of emperors. The ‘unshakable protection’ of the law (5.21) is one of the highest duties of the ruler, while Agapetus’ emperor, by contrast, is not bound by the law (ch. 27), although he observes it out of his goodwill and virtue. This last was exactly as Justinian claimed in his textbook for law students, when he cited with approval pronouncements of two earlier emperors, Severus and Antoninus: ‘although we are exempt from the laws, nevertheless we live by the laws’.²³⁹

²³⁸ See p. 10 above.

²³⁹ *JInst.* 2.17.8.

This, however, presents us with problems of interpretation: a philosopher-ruler of the kind presented by Plato, certainly in his *Republic*, formed by education in the 'political' and 'theoretical' virtues, should not need the constraints of a mixed constitution, or even of the law. If so, we might conclude, like O'Meara, that our author's realism (combined with his determination to curb imperial power) has triumphed over metaphysical enthusiasm.²⁴⁰ We might even conclude that the *Dialogue* is simply using fancy Neoplatonic language to make the reality of absolute power more bearable. This would be wrong. For the *Dialogue* says of imperial rule, 'what is given from God to emperors should be embedded in the state amongst men both justly and in public law' (5.45). In other words, we are not dealing with an ideal state in which imperial rule and legal institutions are related merely contingently, but one where there is a necessary, harmonious, connexion between all the politically salient elements: emperor, law, priests and the various social classes etc. The true, that is the Platonic, political scientist will understand this. He will also know, having read Cicero, that being a philosopher-ruler is the royal element in a complex polity, an integral part of, not somehow apart from it. And it is thanks to Cicero that the author of the *Dialogue* had a model for synthesising Platonic epistemology with a more realistic theory of the state (and of public administration). The ideal state is thus a 'Ciceronian' mixed constitution with a metaphysically enlightened political scientist as its ruler. This lets the *Dialogue* more easily exploit Roman political thought and an interest in Roman historical experience, of a kind that can be found elsewhere in the sixth century in the 'New Rome which neighbours the sea'.²⁴¹

Nor is our author's Platonism in any way simplistic: it reflects, as we have already suggested, in many of its practical aspects that of the *Laws*, rather than the *Republic*. This, the last and longest of the surviving Platonic dialogues, represents a 'second-best' city compared with the arguably unattainable perfection of the *Republic*. Hence, we also find in the *Dialogue*, for example, far more attention paid to the institutions of religion, which

240 O'Meara (2003), 180ff.

241 Quotation from Paul, *Description* 1028, who, although writing in Greek, presents the empire of Justinian as the authentic, contemporary *Roman* Empire. For a deep concern for Roman antiquity and its lessons for the present, see e.g. the Prefaces to the *Code*, *Digest*, *Institutes* and the *Novels*, chiefly on provincial government, discussed in Maas (1986); John the Lydian, *On Magistracies*; or Mal., *Chronicle*, for whom, after the heroic age and the Trojan War, Greek history is, with the exception of Alexander the Great and his successors, effectively blanked out to be replaced by the history of Rome.

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Plato came to see as the bulwark of morality but which are comparatively neglected in the *Republic* – though not in the *Laws* of either Plato or, one must add, of Cicero. For the *Dialogue*, ‘the cult of god and divine matters’ are especially ‘deserving of imperial care ... For it is on this that nature of her own accord makes men’s greatest hopes anchor, and forces them to look up especially in times of peril, as reason clearly shows’ (5.65). This is, however, a very utilitarian conception of religion, and far from the burning contemporary doctrinal and related controversies we discussed in relation to Agapetus. It is entirely compatible with the emphasis on tighter selection of worthy candidates for the priesthood, and the *Dialogue*’s rather sour complaint about the drain to the religious life of men who could be more profitably employed in the army or farming (5.68ff.). But it does see the appointment of the ‘chief priests’ (or bishops) as of sufficient importance to be regulated by one of the five foundational laws of the state and for the Church and its functionaries to be themselves firmly enmeshed in the wider political framework (5.19). So that it is no surprise to learn later (5.65) that the emperor himself will apparently appoint them while delegating to them lesser church appointments. The Church hierarchy will also ensure God’s blessing of the choice of emperor (5.51). Thus a symbiosis of church and state will be ensured in a manner analogous to the partnership defined by the emperor in his *Novel* 6. Whatever objection Justinian might have taken to other aspects of this text, he would probably not have objected to its regulation of the Church.

To sum up, our author still adheres to the Platonic concept of the philosopher-ruler, yet he is clear that this paragon must operate in a much more clearly defined constitutional framework, and one with which, seeing that he was probably a senior legal administrator, he would be at home. O’Meara is right, therefore, in seeing various departures in the *Dialogue* from the *Republic* – the departure, for example, from the full equality of women amongst the ruling class, or the persistence of a family life amongst the elite – not as fundamental criticisms of Plato as such, which Photius’ text could imply.²⁴² Like his proposed ecclesiastical legislation, they are all gestures towards realism in a work that is conscious throughout of both contemporary military and political issues, as also is Book 4.

242 There is no reference to Cicero in O’Meara (2003).

(viii) Criticism of the Emperor

But the arrangements advocated in the *Dialogue* are not simply meant to be workable. Our author did not want his constitution to be called ‘Dicaearchan’ simply because that writer had belonged to a tradition that valued practical realism (for which Cicero admired him).²⁴³ They go further. To see this, one has only to ask the famous question posed by Cicero: ‘*Cui bono?*’, ‘Who benefits?’ The fundamental concept, that of the earthly empire as a microcosm of the heavenly and the rule of the emperor as an earthly imitation of the rule of God, is itself profoundly ideological in the sense of representing an idea, or complex of ideas, designed to influence social policy and values and reflecting the interests of a particular social group. It is unsurprising that, in the repressive intellectual climate of the sixth century, it is hard to hear dissenting voices. Nevertheless a ‘dissident’ Alexandrian philosopher, John Philoponus, did argue that kings were not the images of God on earth, while Zosimus, the last overtly Pagan historian, expressed a preference for the republican government of Rome over the imperial, as may have John the Lydian, albeit with greater – and characteristic – obliquity. At the very least, his ‘defence’ of the emperor suggests that others were critical of him.²⁴⁴ The doctrine of ‘imitation’ as set out in the *Dialogue* embodies and justifies in general terms, and with the resources of Platonic philosophy, a hegemonic ideology, whose ultimate beneficiaries are the emperor, his associates and the social classes that benefited most from this particular ordering of wealth, power and status within their society. But once one examines the all-important detail, while remaining within this overall social ordering, the *Dialogue* is surprisingly critical of the Justinianic regime in a way all the more interesting for representing criticisms of a living emperor (it is not difficult to find criticisms of the safely dead: of Justinian, for instance, by Evagrius),²⁴⁵ but lacking the hysteria and hyperbole one finds all too often in Procopius, or even, reading between the lines, in John the Lydian.²⁴⁶

Individual examples of this tendency are noted as they occur in the footnotes to our text below. But they include the *Dialogue*’s insistence that

243 Cicero, *Laws* 3.6.

244 John Philoponus, *On the Creation of the World* 6.16; Philoponus (c.490–after 567) was a distinguished (Miaphysite) Christian philosopher, scientist and theologian from Alexandria. On him, see Sorabji (1987); Zosimus, 1.5.2–4 (writing at the outset of the C6); John the Lydian, *On Magistracies* 2.1ff.; Procopius passionately detested at least one emperor, but not apparently the imperial system. See Averil Cameron (1985), 252ff.

245 Evagrius, *EH* 4.30.

246 E.g. *SH passim*; John the Lydian, *On Magistracies* 3.57ff.

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power is exercised through a system of mediating ranks (5.58ff.). The effect of this, apart from putting a general constraint on the imperial exercise of authority, is to leave it to the immediately lower ranks, the senatorial order, our 'optimates' that is, to get on with administering the empire. This does not merely conflict with Agapetus' advice (ch. 26) that nothing is too small for the emperor's attention; it would also make it easier for the senatorial classes not simply to govern the empire in their own interest but, more specifically, also to prevent what was for them the greatest scandal of Justinianic rule: the high taxation that Procopius or John the Lydian deplores, and that Justinian needed to defend in his legislation.²⁴⁷

By way of a contrasting view, we have seen how Agapetus not only shows (e.g. in chs. 16, 45, and 60) a concern for the poor lacking at least in what survives of the *Dialogue*, but also counsels that the emperor should actively pursue what we have dubbed redistributive taxation policies. In other words, although the recommendation in the *Dialogue* that the emperor should not concern himself with the details of administration could seem on first reading to be an innocuous recommendation to ensure good government, it has in fact profound implications for the distribution of wealth and power in the empire. By extension, those who had a political interest in pursuing social welfare and in cultivating, in Peter Brown's words, a 'constituency of the poor' – at various times, the emperor himself, both to reinforce his claim to legitimacy and secure a power base against political opponents,²⁴⁸ and the episcopate – would be likely to benefit more from the cleric Agapetus' recommendations, while they would be less likely to do so from those of the *Dialogue*.²⁴⁹

It is, therefore, unremarkable against this background that the *Dialogue* reminds us of the need to restrain the lower classes in the state – while, of course, it is only those, possibly selectively bred, upper classes who need 'political knowledge' (5.189). If one doubted that we are being treated, notwithstanding the emphasis on social harmony and the role given even to the lowest classes in the selection of a new emperor, to a tract in the interests

247 E.g. *Just. Nov.* 149, Anatolia; *Edict* 13, Egypt. The earliest legislative act of Justinian's successor, Justin II, who had come to power through the machinations of the *Dialogue*'s optimates, along with the patriarch, was to begin repayment of political debts in the very first *Novel* of his reign in 566: this declared a remission of taxes (*Just. Nov.* 148 [= Justin II *Novel* 1]). See also Corippus, 2.357 for the speed with which, on his accession, the new emperor sought ostentatiously to redress the perceived rapacity of his predecessor.

248 Note, for example, the prominence given to the emperor's good works in the *Buildings*, and in Paul, in both his *Description of Hagia Sophia* and his *Description of the Ambo*.

249 Peter Brown (2002).

of the 'optimates', we have only to read (in 5.16ff.) what Averil Cameron interprets as further warnings to heed the interests of that class, or the way in which meritocracy is qualified in the *Dialogue*.²⁵⁰ Even within the elite itself, the *Dialogue* makes clear, social distinctions must be drawn.

Thus our author commendably wished to recruit into the elite able men of whatever background, which some might see as a 'democratic' feature of the work. (5.31ff.). It emerges, however, that some members of the elite will be more equal than others; those who are there simply in terms of their ability will form a second, but subordinate, chamber of the 'senate'. In other words, the state needs clever chaps, but they mustn't run the show. Here one recalls the bitter resentment expressed against many of the 'new men' who were indispensable to the Justinianic regime, of whom John the Cappadocian is only the best known, but who were excoriated in the writings of Procopius and others, not least owing to their zeal and efficiency in collecting tax from the upper classes ...

One could develop such examples at greater length. But let us simply register here our good fortune in possessing, in Agapetus and the *Dialogue*, two sophisticated texts that deepen our understanding of the political and intellectual culture of the sixth century. Differences of genre, even of intended audiences, are less significant than the fact that, although both were constructed within the same paradigm of the emperor as the imitator of God, not only are their understandings of this concept different, their recommendations also carry radically different political charges. One is written from an alienated upper-class perspective, complementing that of, say, Procopius or John the Lydian; the other, written by a cleric, is closer to that of explicitly Christian writers in its concern for the poor, echoing what we find in such sixth- and seventh-century saints' *Lives* as those of John the Almsgiver, Theodore of Sykeon or Nicholas of Sion, in the *kontakia* of Romanos or the *Homilies* of Leontius the Deacon. Such men as these often display less sensitivity for, and even active hostility to, the political interests of the upper classes. Most striking of all, perhaps, is the way that Agapetus' emperor is, in effect, 'the shadow of God' on earth, to use terminology employed by later, Ottoman rulers of Constantinople, constrained by no human agency. The *Dialogue*, by contrast, for all its concern for upper-class interests and its all-wise, if effectively constrained, philosopher-emperor, offers something closer to our idea of a constitutional monarchy: a state grounded in the rule

250 Averil Cameron (1985), 250. See *Dialogue* 5.33 for a 'higher' aristocratic, and a meritocratic 'lower' college of optimates.

of law and providing scope, within those same classes at least, for political activity.

(ix) The Author's Religion

Finally, was our author a Christian? For one commentator, Lesley MacCoull, he was.²⁵¹ She notes, in 5.123, an apparent biblical reference to the creation of man in God's image (Gen. 1.26–27); she sees a reference (5.191) to 'walking in the light' as a New Testament locution. For her, the reference to groaning 'as if, as they say, from the depths of your soul, like a man outraged' (5.107), comes from Psalm 130.²⁵² She also believes that the use of sortition in the imperial selection process is a deliberate reflection of the selection of Matthias by lot to be an apostle (after Judas' defection) in Acts 1.24–26.

Such arguments fail to convince, even on the heroic assumption that a few 'Christian' phrases make their user a Christian, especially in an intolerant Christian society. Arguably more important in the cultural flux of the sixth century, we should think at least twice before either assuming a hard distinction between Christians and 'Hellenes', or reading too much into a 'Christian' allusion in a Pagan writer – assuming we can unambiguously identify one – or a 'Pagan' allusion in a Christian writer.²⁵³ Even the seeming reference in 5.122 to man's being in the likeness of God, which for O'Meara is the only definite Christian reference 'albeit an isolated and rather weak indication', can be (at least partly) explained through the way in which the higher persists in the lower in the Neoplatonic theory of the emanation of Being: in this case, ultimately the way the One (or God) persists in man.²⁵⁴

Nor should we hasten to draw inferences from the *Dialogue's* prescriptions on Church affairs. Its author, in the interests of realism, could not avoid dealing with the institutions of religion, whatever his personal views. This had to mean, in the sixth-century empire, the Church and its authorities. Yet what it says on this subject is hardly a resounding declaration of Christian faith, more a testament to the social and psychological utility of religion. As to the reference to 'groaning from the depths', a phrase now perhaps

251 MacCoull (2006).

252 An apparently proverbial verse, which if MacCoull were right, would be the only plausibly biblical quotation in the (surviving) work. Mazzucchi (2002), however, is now as inclined to attribute these words to Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.485 or 2.288, as to Psalm 130.

253 See pp. 15–17 above.

254 O'Meara (2003), 183.

best-known from the title of Oscar Wilde's letter, *De Profundis*, sent from prison to his lover, Lord Alfred Douglas, there seems no good reason to regard it, with Mazzuchi, as other than a well-known, almost proverbial saying, whose source is immaterial. Similarly, why a reference to 'walking in the light' must be a biblical allusion is again obscure. Are all references to 'enlightenment' or metaphors about 'casting light' so to be construed? As for Matthias and sortition, selection by lot of a wide range of primarily religious officials is prescribed in Plato's *Laws* (749b–c), in order to leave the choice to the Divine. It is more likely to be this shared idea that underpins both the actions of the surviving apostles and Plato's recommendations, rather than the choice of Matthias inspiring the selection procedure here. Finally, MacCoull sees the references to the ruler's and his subjects' return to 'their mother city above' after their efforts here on earth (5.194) as relating to the New Testament (Gal. 4.26; Heb. 13.14, 11.14–16). However, the metaphor in the *Dialogue* of exile and return to a mother city above is a common Platonic and Neoplatonic trope: in, for example, the heavenly city of the *Republic*, in Proclus' 'intelligible city', in the emperor Julian's description of the human condition as one of exile from which we aspire to return, and in Plotinus' interpretation of Odysseus' return home as the return of the soul to the One.²⁵⁵

So what was our author then? Again, very, very hard to say: Photius does not query his orthodoxy as he does that of John Lydus, on whom his verdict could almost apply to our author, except that our man gives precious little evidence of venerating anything outside the Neoplatonic tradition or Cicero, or indeed to many from late antiquity including those, like Agathias and Paul, whom we discuss below: 'He respects and venerates Hellenic beliefs; he also venerates our [*sc.* Christian] beliefs; without giving the reader any easy way of deciding whether such veneration is genuine or hypocritical.'²⁵⁶

We have already seen good reasons why sixth-century writers should be oblique – including in order to avoid torture or worse – not least dissident Platonic philosophers.²⁵⁷ Against such a background, our author's choice of an archaic genre, the philosophical dialogue and one relatively free of Christian contamination – although employed by Christians in the School of Gaza

255 O'Meara (2003), 176, for full refs. Odysseus is the hero of Homer's epic poem, the *Odyssey*, which revolves around his eventful ten-year return journey and arrival back at his home island of Ithaca after the fall of Troy.

256 Photius, *Bibliotheca*, *Codex* 180; Kaldellis (2003) sees no grounds for thinking John a Christian.

257 Kaldellis (2004), esp. ch. 3, has cogently developed this theme.

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– can easily be read as hinting at non-Christian sympathies, but without his writing anything overtly dissentient. That view is the more plausible when one recalls that Plato was one of the great ‘Hellenes’ singled out for abuse by Romanos in his *kontakion* 33 on the *Person of Christ*; another was Homer, the most-quoted author in the *Dialogue*, and as fundamental to classical Greek culture as Shakespeare and the Bible once were to English.²⁵⁸ Nor was Cicero a Christian. In drawing on him, our author was moving further away from the Christian mainstream.

Pagans, although at the beginning of the reign patently more numerous than Christian propagandists admitted, were actively persecuted under Justinian – indeed the model for one of the *Dialogue*’s interlocutors may have been executed.²⁵⁹ By the end of the reign, when the *Dialogue* was composed, Christians were even more obviously in the ascendant – and Pagans still harried. The personal incentives, certainly for anyone with social pretensions or an official career, to conceal whatever reservations they may have had about the official ideology, were powerful – so that indications of dissent carry greater evidential weight than professions of orthodoxy. This could explain why the author remains unknown; unusually, Photius cites no name for the author of this work. The criticisms of the emperor would also, of course, afford a strong incentive to anonymity, nor, as Averil Cameron observed (1985, 251), was a political programme designed to have philosophers rule likely to commend itself to an emperor who had persecuted Platonists. It does not, of course, make it easier to get at the truth that Neoplatonism was theistic and frequently employed a language akin to that of Christians, and which Christians had themselves exploited. Indeed, the *kontakion* at the start of the re-dedication festivities for Hagia Sophia in 562 – not, that is, Paul’s poem – employs quite technical Platonic phraseology, distinguishing between what is perceptible to the senses and what can be known, namely the ‘sun of truth’, by the ‘eyes of the mind’ or intellect, even if the overall flavour there is militantly Christian.²⁶⁰

In fact, this discussion may say less about our author’s religious affiliations than the difficulty so often encountered in definitively assigning an author to a particular religious category in this period of ideological ferment and political repression, when a wide range of styles and genres were avail-

258 For the contemporary strength of Paganism and the Justinianic persecutions, see Kaldellis (2007) esp. ch. 3, and Bell (forthcoming). For the fall of the School of Athens, see Watts (2006), ch. 5.

259 Section 2.(ii) above.

260 Translation in Palmer (1988). *str.* 6.

able to writers. For comparable ambiguity, O'Meara cites the example of our author's earlier Western contemporary, the politician and Neoplatonic philosopher Boethius, whose Christianity, O'Meara notes, is 'not exactly evident in his *Consolation of Philosophy*', although widely assumed on the basis of theological works attributed to him. O'Meara could have as easily cited John the Lydian or Procopius, whose Christian credentials, like those of Agathias, have also recently been called into question.²⁶¹ It was a world, like all autocracies, ancient and modern, especially those with strongly articulated ideological foundations, where freedom of expression – that *parrhesia* which Paul the Silentiary says that the late empress Theodora enjoyed with God – was a rarity and could cost one's life.²⁶²

But after looking at how others saw the emperor, it is now time, through the medium of Paul's *Description*, to see how the emperor wished himself to be seen – and, no less important, not seen – in the dark final years of his reign.

6. PAUL THE SILENTIARY – *DESCRIPTION OF HAGIA SOPHIA*: SOURCES, METHODS AND THOUGHT

(i) Sources and Scholarship

Paul's *Description* (or *Ekphrasis*) is, ostensibly, primarily 'about' Justinian's newly repaired great church of the Holy Wisdom (the English translation of 'Hagia Sophia', modern Aya Sofya Müzesi, in Istanbul). This was built between 532 and 537 on the site of its predecessor which had been reduced to 'a charred mass of ruins' in the Nika riot.²⁶³ Here Paul has done an excellent job; only Procopius, in his *Buildings*, is in the same league as an imperial panegyrist of buildings, and even he is surpassed by Paul in his extremely detailed – and versified – account of Hagia Sophia. As Paul's friend and poetic collaborator, the historian and poet, Agathias, tells us:

if anyone who lives far from the capital wishes to get a clear and comprehensive picture of the church as he would if he were there to view it in person, then he could hardly do better than read the poem in hexameters of Paul, the son of Cyrus and grandson of Florus ... In it will be found the ordered plan of the

261 Kaldellis (1997, 1999, Agathias; 2003, John Lydus; 2004, Procopius).

262 For Theodora, Paul, *Description* 60ff.; for the dangers of free speech, Procopius, *SH* 1.1.

263 *Bldgs.* 1.1.22.

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building described in full detail ... with the exquisite subtlety of a connoisseur ... All [*sc. its*] features and any others worth noting, whether great and small, are described in the poem and are presented as clearly and vividly to the reader as they would be to the most observant and assiduous of visitors.²⁶⁴

Nor is there a shortage of corroboration of the emotional impact of the church, especially when the imperial liturgy was celebrated, as described by Paul either here or in his separate *Description of the Ambo* of the Great Church, or as noted by Procopius.²⁶⁵ Even foreigners were impressed. Read, for example, the tenth-century report of the emissaries of Prince Vladimir of Kiev, the only early non-Byzantine text on this subject, which describes the effect of the church on a service they had attended:

We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendour or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We only know that God dwells there amongst men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget the beauty.²⁶⁶

Yet Paul's poem did not just communicate the uplift that the majesty of Hagia Sophia and the performances it hosted might afford, so that 'even unbelievers will admit unequivocally that its inhabitant is God'.²⁶⁷ Nor was providing a description, in however grand, 'refined and erudite' a form, as Agathias puts it, the only, or even the most important thing Paul's poem was 'about'. It was also a panegyric – a living genre of great antiquity, with rules set out, for example, in works attributed to the third-century rhetorician Menander Rhetor, still studied in the sixth.²⁶⁸ As a genre, it had also received a boost in Justinian's reign from a number of earlier surviving examples on which Paul could build. These included Procopius' innovatory approach of using buildings as the *subjects* of a panegyric, as opposed to referring to them *en passant* as instances of, say, imperial benevolence; there were also two religious panegyrics in verse recently created by Romanos; we have mentioned Anicia Juliana's elaborate dedicatory poem for St Polyeuctus extolling her family, but have passed over a rival (?), similarly self-glorifying dedication of the church of Sts Sergius and Bacchus to Justinian and

264 Agathias, *Histories* 5.9.7, trans. Frendo.

265 For *ambo* see n. 59 above; see *Bldgs.* 1.1.61 for the impact of the church.

266 *The Russian Primary Chronicle* 111. Vladimir (r. 958–1015) oversaw the conversion of the Rus' to Christianity.

267 *Kontakion on the Inauguration of Hagia Sophia*, str. 15, written for the start of the same re-dedication festivities, trans. Palmer (1988).

268 Menander Rhetor; for examples, *XII Panegyrici Latini*; for studies of the genre in late antiquity, see Mary Whitby (1998).

Theodora, which dates from early in their reign.²⁶⁹ Most important of all, however, is that Paul's poem sought to promote and reaffirm the legitimate authority, especially the charismatic authority, of Justinian at a difficult time for the regime, by underscoring the divine protection that the emperor deservedly continued to enjoy – above all, on this occasion, through his achievement in Hagia Sophia.

It is on this panegyric – and above all, political – aspect of the poem that what follows will concentrate; this justifies its inclusion in a book dealing with political thought rather than literary or artistic developments in the sixth century. However, for the poem to have its desired (political) impact, readers must keep in mind throughout the splendour of the building, and thereby of its begetter, which Paul aims both to exalt and to complement, not least through employing a high classicising style as magnificent in its way as the object and man it glorifies. This sets both in a context that is both Hellenic (in style and language) and Christian (in substance). Such readers must also recall the circumstances of the re-dedication ceremonies generally: these lasted over a fortnight, including the ceremonial elements – the processions and the like – that accompanied the delivery of Paul's poem but that, like the art-historical aspects of the poem, we cannot address in detail without becoming diverted from our main political concerns.

To deal adequately with even the politics of the poem is hard enough. Paul's language, for example, is difficult; his *grandeurs* are often rebarbatively obscure; grandiloquent praises of autocrats are out of fashion. One cannot, for instance, insist that a poet always call a spade a spade, but to refer, for instance, to late December/early January by its astrological sign of Capricorn as 'a fishy goat' (318) may be a metaphor too far. Nevertheless, today's reader still receives more detailed help than the student of either Agapetus or the *Dialogue*. We have, in particular, two useful commentaries, by Friedländer (1912, reprinted 1969) and Maria Fobelli (2005), in German and Italian respectively, with the latter focused on architectural history and exceptionally well illustrated. Other helpful material in English also exists, with full notes and bibliographies. This includes a wide-ranging article by Ruth Macrides and Paul Magdalino, as well as articles on detailed aspects of the poem by Mary Whitby.²⁷⁰

269 For Romanos' *kontakia* 16 and 54, see Topping (1977; 1978). GA 1.10 for the St Polyeuctos' dedication. Ebersolt and Thiers (1979), 24, for the Sts Sergius and Bacchus' dedication.

270 Macrides and Magdalino (1985); Mary Whitby (1985a; 1985b; 1987a; 1987b).

(ii) The Structure of the *Description*

Before examining how Paul's *Description* relates to the political culture of the age of Justinian, we must consider some 'technical' aspects of the poem. Paul declaimed it, we saw, some time between 24 December 562 and 6 January 563 during festivities which, he claims (75–80), had been extended by popular request, allegedly from all sections of the community. The recitation opened with a panegyric to the emperor (1–80) in the imperial palace, which covered a large area now partly occupied by the present Sultan Ahmet (or 'Blue') Mosque, immediately to the south-east of the Hippodrome. This was followed, according to a *lemma* – an annotation going back at least to the tenth-century MS of the poem – by a procession apparently to the patriarch's palace (*episkopeion*), rather than to the church itself, in the buildings that made up the nearby Hagia Sophia complex. As Paul put it (80–85), 'we have come from the hearth of the king, to the hearth of the King who is the all greatest ... on account of whom victory inheres in our master here'. Here a second panegyric followed (81–134), this time nominally to the patriarch, Eutychius, who presided over the remainder of the performance, while the poem concludes with further praise of him (967–1029).

This reminds us that the poem was addressed to *both* the ecclesiastical *and* lay authorities. It has been suggested that the chief objective of the poem was to demonstrate their solidarity at a time, we recall, of even more than usually acrimonious religious controversy.²⁷¹ The poem was certainly intended to glorify the patriarch and his (current) alliance with Justinian, and also to proclaim solidarity between the ecclesiastical and lay establishments more generally. The movement from palace to patriarchate was doubtless intended to reinforce this objective. But these are secondary objectives. The poem – including, when read closely, the praise of the patriarch himself – seeks to promote the glory of the emperor, as manifested through the glory of his church. The poet had little definite to say about the prelate, whose contribution to the rebuilding seems to have been minimal. Indeed, Paul, before commencing his second encomium of the patriarch Eutychius (967ff.), actually apologises to the emperor for praising the patriarch on the grounds that praise of the priest is, like the building of Hagia Sophia itself, really praise of the emperor's achievement in appointing him!

This achievement emerges more clearly from the structure of the poem. In form, it is a poetical 'triptych', where the detailed description of the church's architecture and furnishings, 566 lines out of 1029 (i.e. lines 355–920), is

271 E.g. by Averil Cameron (1985), 255.

flanked by two overtly panegyric sections. The initial section includes two prologues: the first (1–80) constitutes a panegyric of the emperor; the second (81–135), after the imperial party has moved to the patriarchal palace, of the patriarch himself. These prologues are written in a ‘less elevated metre’, namely iambic trimeters.²⁷² The remainder of the poem comprises further panegyric material, praising ‘New Rome’ (i.e. Constantinople) and the emperor’s zeal in repairing the broken dome (136–354), the *Description* proper (355–920) and the final panegyrics of emperor (921–66) and patriarch (967–1029). These sections are all written in hexameters, the grand epic metre *par excellence*. However, we cannot distinguish sharply between the ‘panegyric’ and ‘descriptive’ portions of the work. The latter are also panegyric. Thus in, say, describing where the rich building materials of the church come from, Paul is again extolling the scale and riches of Justinian’s empire.²⁷³ Similarly, in his extended description of the sumptuous altar cloth (755–805, tr. Mango), in an otherwise then strikingly aniconic building (the surviving pictorial mosaics are of later date), he gives prominence to the:

countless deeds of the emperors [*sc.* Justinian and Theodora], guardians of the city: here you may see hospitals for the sick, there sacred fanes ... [*sc.* elsewhere] you may see the monarchs joined together, here by the hand of Mary, the Mother of God, here by that of Christ. (797–804, Mango)

Here, as when reading the catalogue of imperial charitable works, including for former sex-workers in the capital, in Procopius or in the similar references to imperial benefactions in Paul’s own later *Description of the Ambo*,²⁷⁴ we recall Agapetus’ politick recommendations that the emperor should cherish the poor, combined here with (another) reaffirmation of the emperor’s divine favour (and his reward).

Rather, the key element of panegyric in this, nominally architectural, section emerges from the very description of the church itself. It is above all *Justinian’s* church: he built it in 532–37 as an assertion of his authority following the ruinous Nika riot which both destroyed its predecessor and revealed great senatorial alienation as well as hostility amongst the populace more generally. Its construction also, quite deliberately, pushed into second

272 See Mary Whitby (1985b), for details of the ceremonial and technicalities of the poem. Aristotle, *Poetics* 49a 21–28, notes that ‘the iambic is the verse most suited to speech. An indication of this is that in everyday speech ... we use mostly iambic rhythms, but rarely hexameters.’

273 E.g. 567ff., 617ff. Macrides and Magdalino (1985).

274 E.g. *Bldgs.* 1.9; *Ambo* 25ff., 50ff., and 289ff. See Mango (1986) for other passages from Paul’s *Descriptions* not translated here.

place the church of St Polyeuctus built by Anicia Juliana, who we saw earlier may be plausibly regarded as the embodiment, even flag-bearer of these potentially disloyal upper classes.²⁷⁵ By doing so, he asserted his authority over the social groupings, not least the descendants of the late emperor, Anastasius, whose pretensions her church advertised.

But Justinian was to do better: Romanos could describe Hagia Sophia as excelling Solomon, thereby trumping Anicia Juliana's similar claim in respect of the lesser St Polyeuctus.²⁷⁶ We shall touch on Paul's lengthy description of the lighting arrangements below. But we are already entitled to see in this poem, therefore, a further example of the fusion of classical genre and (Christian) religious expression, which has wider implications for the culture of early Byzantium. In classical antiquity, panegyric was a well-developed genre; so too was *Ekphrasis* (or 'description'). Both continued to prosper in late antiquity: for example, the reprint of Friedländer's 1912 edition in 1969 now includes, as well as Paul's two *Descriptions*, other lengthy and free-standing *ekphraseis* from roughly the same period in both verse and prose by John of Gaza and Procopius of Gaza. Descriptions also exist of two churches, this time by Choricus of Gaza. One can find guidance on how to write *ekphraseis* in rhetorical textbooks from, for example, Theon of Alexandria in the first century CE to Athonius in the fifth, where their composition featured amongst students' 'preliminary exercises' (*progymnasmata*). Finally we possess in the (Syriac) poem on the re-dedication of the domed church of Hagia Sophia in Edessa (modern Urfa) a text of particular interest, noted by Cyril Mango, for its symbolical interpretation of the building, partly cosmic, partly biblical.²⁷⁷

As for panegyrics, we have already encountered (Christian) imperial works from Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea; nor should we overlook Bishop Basil of Caesarea's funeral oration over his friend, colleague and the former patriarch of Constantinople, Gregory of Nazianzus, who died around 390. John the Lydian tells us that he himself delivered an encomium on Justinian's wars; Paul may have delivered others now lost.²⁷⁸ Other notable panegyrics of his period include two of the emperor Anastasius (r. 491–518): one by Priscian, in Latin verse; the other by Procopius of Gaza (not the historian,

275 E.g. *Wars* 1.25 for senatorial disaffection. Also Anicia Juliana and St Polyeuctus, pp. 44–45 above, as well as the *Dialogue* itself.

276 Romanos, *kontakion* 54, *str.* 20.4.

277 Extensive extracts of these *ekphraseis* with some commentary, in Mango (1986), ch. 3.

278 Paul's panegyric summary of Justinian's achievements is easily compatible with a fuller one by him elsewhere.

therefore, who was Procopius of Caesarea). There was a precedent even for lengthy recitations in church: Arator, a Latin poet and former courtier of the Gothic king, Theodoric (c.454–526), but later a protégé of the pope Vigilius, declaimed his poem on the Acts of the Apostles over several days in the church of St Peter *ad Vincula* in Rome.²⁷⁹

However, the cultural and intellectual world was in notable ferment. This reflected the ever-intensifying hegemony of Christianity, the rise of bishops in all aspects of provincial administration, an increasingly centralised imperial administration, and the parallel decline of the previously relatively autonomous (and Pagan) urban elites, who had been the mainstay of classical culture.²⁸⁰ Against this background, new genres, which had accompanied the rise of Christianity from, in some cases, the second or third centuries onward, continued to develop; there was also much ‘experimentation’ (if this is an appropriate word in a culture where novelty so often meant harking back to old models) in the handling of traditional genres. This could range from the carefully cultivated, extreme archaism and rhetorical exuberance that we find in Paul, who is himself heavily indebted to the fifth-century poet Nonnus – the reference to the ‘fishy goat’ above was an allusion to him²⁸¹ – and to the highly sophisticated Hellenistic poetic experimenter Callimachus; to a strict imitation of classical models, as we also find in Paul’s erotic epigrams; and to other kinds of literary variations, including the exploitation of both Christian and ‘Hellenic’ sources by Agapetus.

Jaś Elsner has now also shown how Procopius’ innovation was to fuse the genres of *ekphrasis* and panegyric into a panegyric discourse, at one level, about buildings, and, at a more significant level – even at some cost to technical, architectural accuracy – about the glory of the emperor who had built them. He sees Procopius, therefore, as having influenced Paul through this new genre – one that Paul took further, for his poem was not only about, this time, a *single* building (and some of its furnishings), in contrast to the much more wide-ranging work of Procopius, but also meant for declamation in a quasi-liturgical context, with both emperor and patriarch present.²⁸²

Moreover, the classical tradition not only profoundly influenced many of Paul’s tropes: lines 6–20, for instance, describing the span of the empire, could almost apply, for instance, to any Roman emperor of any period. His language is steeped in that of his Pagan predecessors, Homer above all. Nor

279 For Arator, see Hillier (1993); Green (2006).

280 Liebeschuetz (2001); Rapp (2005a).

281 *Dionysiaca* 38.279.

282 Elsner (2007).

is there, any more than in his epigrams, a shortage of classical allusions. Mary Whitby (1985b) judged it significant that, in Paul, it is a personified *Rome* who urges Justinian to rebuild the Great Church, and she attributes this, almost certainly correctly, to Paul's familiarity with Latin authors, and especially the late Roman poets Claudian (c.370–c.404) and Sidonius Apollinaris (c.430–c.484). This is a further example, therefore, of the familiarity with, and indebtedness to, Latin literature of Greek authors that we saw in the *Dialogue*. Yet this particular personification was becoming tired; only a few years later, a Christian figure replaces Rome. It is now Jesus' mother, Mary, who urges Justinian's successor, Justin II, to assume the throne (although still speaking in Latin, while a personified 'Roma' is depicted elsewhere, but does not speak, in Corippus' poem).²⁸³ For Whitby, this shift in 'imperial advisers' marks the end of an era; Paul's poem, for her, is the last in the line of classical Greek epics. Her case is even stronger when we note how much more theologically oriented was the anonymous hymn (*kontakion*) chanted at the beginning of the re-dedication ceremonies than Paul's *Description*. He, by contrast, is at pains to demonstrate once again his mastery of classical techniques and rhetorical tropes rather than theology – and this may be in itself another last expression of classical tradition in the reign of Justinian.²⁸⁴

This judgement, however, takes us back to problems we have already encountered in asking where our three authors stood in terms of religion, this time in a wider cultural context and at a slightly later date. We need first to distinguish between the private and the public arenas. Officials (I write from experience as a former civil servant), when called on to perform in public, especially when the great are present, usually take considerable care to stay 'on message', however unsympathetic that message (or the audience) may be to them personally. They do their best to articulate what their masters tell them, or more often what they would, if they had thought of it, have liked them to say. This Paul does magnificently. But we should be careful not to infer from this public performance (or, for that matter, Procopius' posture in his *Buildings*) his private views – as opposed to his literary virtuosity.

That said, however, there is a marked contrast here with, for instance, Agapetus at the start of Justinian's reign. For him Christ, as opposed to God, makes a largely formal appearance at the end of a work that, without

283 Corippus, 1.288–90.

284 The *kontakion*: see Trypanis (1968) for Greek text; Palmer (1988) for translation. See Averil Cameron (1979) for the decline of classical and the rise of Christian imagery from the late C6 to C7.

that chapter and words and sentences with especially strong Christian overtones, could date from almost any time in the previous 800 years. In the early years of Justinian, one can find other authors where Christian and Pagan themes consort at best uncomfortably.²⁸⁵ But there seems no strain in Paul's poem between the Christian and the Pagan, 'Hellenic' imagery or language in a composition designed for public consumption. Paul, however, was writing towards the very end of Justinian's reign – the emperor died in 565 – and for the grandest of the grand, lay and priestly. So whatever the *private* views of some literary practitioners at least, we can see in Paul a (relatively early?) exemplar of the greater penetration of Christian ideas, images and themes, even in classicising literature, within a ruling elite now increasingly composed of clerics and Christians more generally, and when Christianity stood on the threshold of total ideological victory. This seems to have permitted an easier relationship of old and new than had prevailed in the earlier years of Justinian's reign.²⁸⁶ Hence Paul could praise Homer (617), still more significantly write in Homerising verse, and introduce Pagan mythological personalities in probably the same church where the hymnodist, Romanos, in strikingly unclassical metres, had denounced Homer, along with such other great 'Hellenes' as Plato and Demosthenes, before the very same emperor around thirty years before.²⁸⁷

(iii) The Political Message

But if the symbolic universe of the empire remained fluid, so too did the wider political situation. This introduction opened with a brief description of tensions and conflicts within the empire. Macrides and Magdalino (1988) recognised the fraught state of the empire in Justinian's last years as the backdrop for Paul's work. The *Chronicles* of Malalas and Theophanes for the years 556–65 are depressing.²⁸⁸ They include revolts (of Jews and Samaritans), an army mutiny, famine in the capital, plague and severe earthquakes – all in a society where such catastrophes were seen, very literally, as acts of God. After the traumatic collapse, following an earthquake, of the

285 As Averil Cameron noted in an important article (1979), esp. 24–29. These issues are explored further in e.g. Averil Cameron (1981), esp. ch. 4, and (2006), with full bibliographies.

286 If true, this makes the absence of such 'fusion' in the *Dialogue* all the more striking if we are right to date it towards the end of Justinian's reign.

287 Romanos, *Kontakion* 33, *str.* 17.

288 The events in the remainder of this paragraph are covered in Mal., *Chronicle* 487–96 (ed. Jeffrey 1986), Theophanes *AM* 6048–57, and Agathias, *Histories* 5.1–20. See Corippus, 2.260–66 (trans. Averil Cameron), and Agathias, *Histories* 5.13 for imperial neglect.

dome of Hagia Sophia in 558, in 559 Huns and Avars even penetrated the outermost defences of the capital, the so-called Long Wall, then decrepit, which joined the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara. They were only repulsed at the last moment by a scratch force raised by Belisarius. In addition, there was a panic over a rumour that the aged emperor had died, which produced a bread shortage. Most years also appear to have suffered severe outbreaks of factional violence, burning swaths of the city.

No sooner had good news arrived of belated, final victory in Italy than in November 562, the month before the re-dedication of Hagia Sophia, there was discovered the plot of Ablabius and others to kill the emperor, to which Paul devotes some 30 lines (25–55) near the start of his poem, and a further 21 lines to this and other conspiracies near its end (937–958). Agathias (5.14), Menander Protector (fr. 5) and Corippus (2.260) all present an unflattering portrait of the imperial government at this period: the latter even goes so far as to say, perhaps a little tendentiously as he was making a contrast with the new emperor Justin II, that: ‘the old man [*sc.* Justinian] no longer cared; he was altogether cold ... many things were too much neglected while [*sc.* he] was alive.’ It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the author of the *Dialogue* should also have been so gloomy about the continuing depredations of the factions and have insisted on the need to guarantee the imperial succession. No less understandable is his recommendation that the emperor should leave the details of government to others. We can easily grasp too why Paul, like Corippus a few years later (3.310ff.), felt he had to emphasise so strongly God’s protection of the emperor – and empire.

Against this sombre background, the rebuilding of what had been conceived in the 530s as the greatest political and religious assertion of Justinian’s rule after the Nika riot was an event of the highest significance. A mere piece of hack writing to celebrate this achievement would not have met the political needs of the regime. It is also probable that Paul – we recall the tribute Agathias (*Histories* 5.7) pays to his literary virtuosity – was chosen as the man most likely to declaim a poem that would meet the exacting rhetorical standards of a religious occasion celebrating the reconstruction of the Great Church, whose magnificence he could profitably extol at length. But he could also satisfy the twofold requirement of what the emperor needed, in political terms, to have said, and equally not have said – and before probably the best-informed, most highly educated, and above all, powerful audience the empire could assemble. The positive messages in Paul’s work are straightforward, and drummed in repeatedly. They are summed up in the rhetorical question:

Does he not take up arms against God Himself, the man who is not willing for this emperor to rule, a man who is gentle and kindly, and who gives benefits in moderation to friends and enemies alike? (54–57)

A resounding ‘yes’ to this question is provided under three headings. The first is God’s protection and advancement of his faithful servant, Justinian. We are invited to see this in the success of Justinian’s arms, the sway and expansion of his dominions (10ff.) from ‘the East’, unspecified, via Libya, to Spain – a motif reprised several times. But we also see it in God’s care for the emperor’s personal safety, as demonstrated in the frustration of the conspiracy of Ablabius (25ff.). We see it too in the role Justinian shares with his sainted wife as intercessor for humankind with God (58ff.). This is his reward – his ladder to heaven, to borrow Agapetus’ metaphor (ch. 72); it reflects such personal qualities as his mercy, piety, his care of the poor and, above all, his construction of, and his deep, lasting commitment to, his Great Church. All this may be standard panegyric material; that does not lessen its importance.

Second, and more innovatory, is the emphasis throughout not simply on spreading Christianity but on Justinian’s solidarity with the patriarch, and, by extension, with the entire ecclesiastical establishment. This, of course, carries the implication that matters could be different. Indeed, the emperor and patriarch were, in less than two years, to fall out over Justinian’s alleged espousal of *aphthartodocetism*.²⁸⁹ But here the twin pillars of the regime are as one; indeed, one consequence of the greatness of his patriarch is further victory for Justinian (975ff.). The same message is conveyed, albeit more as an aspiration than as an actual accomplishment, by the author of the *kontakion* that opened the re-dedication celebration: ‘Grant peace to Thy people by banishing heresies and crushing the strength of the barbarians, and the unity of priests and emperor’ (*str.* 18, trans. Palmer [1988]).

Finally, and closely related to this current ecclesiastical harmony, is the dramatic assertion of Constantinople’s primacy over ‘Old’ Rome – the ‘daughter’ who now excels her ‘mother’ (164–67) – and by implication its bishop (or pope). But we can also see here, in its message of rebirth, in the floral imagery as well as in the old poetic name – *Anthousa*, ‘Flowering’ in Greek (156) – bestowed on the city, a reference to Justinian’s longstanding,

²⁸⁹ The extreme Miaphysite doctrine that Christ’s flesh was incorruptible (*aphthartos*), not only after the resurrection but from the moment of conception. Justinian saw this doctrine as a way towards producing Christian unity. It was denounced both by other Miaphysites and by Catholics as incompatible with the true humanity of Jesus. In 564, Justinian seems to have issued an edict (now lost), which Eutychius refused to sign, going into exile as a result.

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if by then becalmed, project of imperial renewal (*renovatio/restauratio imperii*).²⁹⁰

What is striking about all this is, first, how little is new; and secondly, what is either disingenuous in what is said, or how much is left unsaid. As to the former, much of what Paul says could have been declaimed – and with greater effect, because novel – thirty years previously. One has only to read the *Prefaces* to the various editions and sections of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, Justinian's law code, to see the same emphasis on the personal achievements of the emperor in legislating, and his indebtedness to God who had also vouchsafed him outstanding military success – not least, as in Paul, against the Persians.²⁹¹ We also saw at the same earlier period, in Romanos, Justinian and his consort not only interceding with God in the wake of the Nika riot, but also being praised for outdoing Solomon.²⁹² It is extraordinary how much weight the regime still placed on the blitzkrieg that reconquered North Africa: in Justinian's triumph in 533, thirty years before this re-dedication, the actual field commander, Belisarius, had to prostrate himself in the Hippodrome before Justinian – who thereby took public credit for the whole operation. This triumph was still celebrated in mosaic in the vestibule to the imperial palace, the so-called Chalke, in the centre of the city, as Procopius lovingly described. It even featured, after Justinian's death, on his pall.²⁹³

One could be forgiven, against such a barrage, for not noticing, for example, that the much-trumpeted victories over the Persians (the 'Medes', another archaism) had resulted in a by no means wholly satisfactory treaty: the Romans had to pay 30,000 *nomismata* a year to their former enemies, a detail that escapes Paul.²⁹⁴ He similarly 'forgets' that Ablabius' conspiracy was foiled because he turned informer before the event,²⁹⁵ as well as overlooking the alleged involvement of Belisarius in these events.

290 See Maas (1986; 1992) for this concept.

291 E.g. in *C. Deo Auctore* (530), *C. Tanta* (533) and *C. Imperatoriam Maiestatem* 1 (533). The last, introducing the *Institutes*, his legal textbook, sums up these claims well: 'Long hours of work and careful planning have, with God's help, given us success in both [*sc.* war and legislation]. Barbarian and other nations brought beneath our yoke know the scale of our exertions in war. Africa and countless other provinces, restored to Roman jurisdiction after so long an interval, bear witness to the victories granted to us by the will of Heaven ...' (trans. Birks and McLeod).

292 Romanos, *Kontakion* 54, *str.* 20.4.

293 Procopius, *Bldgs.* 1.10.16–19; Corippus, 1. 274.

294 Menander Protector fr. 3. 30k *nomismata* = 416 lbs. of gold.

295 Mal., *Chronicle* 493.

However, as Agathias noted, ‘exaggeration of an individual’s merits is the proper business of panegyric’, and we may expect his audience to have made allowances accordingly.²⁹⁶ Nevertheless, there remain important aspects of the contemporary scene that Paul does not mention, even tendentiously. Nothing at all on the factions, who had recently been terrorising the city. Likewise nothing, for all the praise of Eutychius, on the recent Second Council of Constantinople, over which he had presided, but which had failed to achieve the emperor’s strategic goal ‘of joining together the divided priests of the holy churches of God from the East to the West’.²⁹⁷ The Miaphysites of the East remained (and remain) unreconciled, while relations with Rome – whose bishop had been bullied into attending and endorsing the Council’s conclusions – and with the Italian church more generally never wholly recovered. All we get is the ambiguous reference to the daughter now excelling her mother. Both were, however, to develop in increasingly different directions.²⁹⁸ Perhaps the absence in Paul of any claim like that of Procopius, who could implausibly assert – possibly in the late 550s²⁹⁹ – that the emperor had established the empire on the basis of a single faith, may be an oblique testimony to the limited success of the Council; any such claim in 563/4 would have been highly tendentious, though not impossible – as the reference to ‘banishing heresies’ in the *kontakion* opening the re-dedication celebrations perhaps shows (*str.* 18). As to his lack of a successor, or to Justinian’s worrying illnesses, all Paul can do is express the standard panegyric hope that the emperor will be with us ‘for many revolutions of the years’ (922). In two years that problem would have resolved itself.

However, reading Paul in a study, with reference books and ancient texts to hand, is one thing. To hear him in such exalted company, in such exalted surroundings, in such exalted language must have been quite another. Further, the numinous reality of Hagia Sophia, the accuracy of whose description by Paul Agathias affirmed, as broadly do modern scholars, as it were guaranteed his text. At a political conjuncture where things were going badly wrong, where the emperor was less interested in governing his empire than in theology and was ‘on fire with love of eternal life’,³⁰⁰ Paul was an apologist, a spin-doctor in the modern idiom. Theology could be left to others.

296 *Histories*, Preface 17.

297 Justinian, *Letter to First Session* of Constantinople II (Mansi 9, col. 385).

298 Sotinel in Maas (2005); Herrin (1987), 124–25.

299 *Bldgs.* 1.1. For the dating of this work, see n. 302 below.

300 Corippus, 2.265–67.

(iv) Coda – Hagia Sophia in the *Buildings* of Procopius and Paul's *Description*

A comparison of Paul's and Procopius' panegyric *ekphraseis*, especially in respect of Hagia Sophia, further illuminates the message that imperial panegyric sought to convey towards the end of Justinian's long reign. Both works have so much in common: Chris Wickham has usefully highlighted them for their promotion of the 'one act which sums up [*sc.* Justinian's] desire to be recognised as the ideal or archetypal Roman emperor'. He rightly sets them in their wider context of late antique, early medieval political display, largely through architecture, and cites parallels ranging from the Northumbrian palace complex at Yeavering in England to the Great Mosque of Damascus in Syria.³⁰¹

Unfortunately, even if we leave out of consideration here Procopius' motivation in writing the *Buildings*, such a comparison is not straightforward. Procopius' text is, almost certainly, incomplete and unfinished; there remains no consensus about when it was published.³⁰² Concentration on this issue (and such others as the architectural deficiencies of Procopius elsewhere, when writing about forts on the Eastern frontier) has diverted

301 Wickham (2009), ch. 10: 'The Power of the Visual'.

302 Why might the date of publication matter? Because if we accept the conventional date for the *Bldgs.* of 554/5, we have to explain away Procopius' reference (5.2.8–11) to work he says was then underway on a bridge over the River Sangarius (mod. Sakarya) in north-west Asia Minor. But we know from Theophanes (*AM* 6052), a date independently endorsed by both Michael Whitby (1985) and Mango and Scott in the most recent (1997) edition of Theophanes, that work on the bridge did not begin until 559, and concluded *before* Paul's *Description* in 562/3, when Paul mentions it as complete (928–33). However, if we date the *Bldgs.* to the end of the decade, the allegedly sunny picture it portrays of the empire seems not to correspond to the gloomy last years of Justinian's reign. Worse still, such a late publication date means that Procopius' extensive description of Hagia Sophia in Bk. 1 has failed to mention the collapse of the dome in 558! How, some argue, could Procopius ignore such damage – an act of God of the most minatory kind – to the project of the Justinianic regime? However, if the *Bldgs.* were unfinished, or not properly revised before publication, the earlier passages on Constantinople (and Hagia Sophia) in Bk. 1 could well have been written *before* the dome collapsed, or were meant to have been published *after* the dome had been repaired. The later in the 550s it was written, the closer in any case the repairs would be to completion. The less need, accordingly, to mention a temporary setback. Above all, however, as we noted above, we are dealing with a panegyric – *not* reportage: 'facts' are secondary. Like so many such problems affecting the ancient world, the issue probably cannot be definitively resolved, notwithstanding the volume of scholarly literature. The evidence is usefully reviewed by Kouroumali (2006), ch. 1, though she too easily dismisses Whitby's defence of Theophanes' dating. Also Elsner (2007), ch. 2, with a helpful bibliography.

attention from what is centrally important: the genre of *panegyric* in general and the *Buildings* and Paul's *Description* in particular. Procopius was *not* writing a handbook for archaeologists, still less a travel guide for tourists. What matters to us is not the absolute date of the *Buildings*, but that both works proclaim that same fusion of secular and religious authority under God's vicegerent, the emperor. The differences between Procopius and Paul reflect, in fact, less the wider political health of the empire than the circumstances of the two works. Paul's is concerned with a specific *event*, the re-dedication of Hagia Sophia occasioned by a recent calamity that he could not pass over, but that he possessed the artistry to 'spin' in order to demonstrate the energy and magnificence of Justinian's response (215ff.).

The sequence of the two works, however, matters because, as Elsner has shown, Procopius' book represents a new form of panegyric – and one to which Paul is profoundly indebted, even though he writes in verse. *Buildings* had long featured as incidental elements in panegyrics of great men, as Menander Rhetor counselled, and Elsner provides examples.³⁰³ It is naïve to expect verisimilitude from a panegyric: the genre is about image and its projection, with the inconvenient often deliberately overlooked. This, we have seen, frequently happens in Paul too. Both for instance, pass over arguably the greatest disaster of the reign: the first European pandemic of (probably) bubonic plague in 542 and its recurrences, except possibly for coy references to Justinian's illnesses from which the pious, God-protected monarch recovers.³⁰⁴

Instead, we do not merely have in Procopius a list of the emperor's building achievements across the empire. We have a text that is, in Elsner's words (48–49):

Constantinopoliscentric, [*sc.* where] the ideology of Justinianic intercession presents secular building as a wall to defend the sacred centre, the edifice in which the ritual fusion of Byzantine church and state takes place. We have a Neoplatonic gradation leading from the immaterial God (not described but ever present ...) through his intermediary Justinian and his central city of churches to the relatively more secular and military periphery, through such holy terrain as the scriptural lands of Sinai and Palestine ... Each part, circumference and

303 Elsner (2007). His examples include Menander Rhetor, 2.302.15–16; the model text in the *Panegyrici Latini* 1.50.4, 51.1–3; the C4 Antiochene orator, Libanius (*Or.* 1.39, 41), mocking a rival's attempts to flatter the emperor Constantius by describing some of his building works.

304 E.g. *Bldgs.* 1.6.5–8; *Description* 19. For the plague, see now Little (2007) with full bibliography. (Procopius, however, describes the plague elsewhere in both *Wars* (e.g. 2.22ff.) and *SH* (e.g. 4, 6, 18).)

centre, is predicated upon the health of the other, although ... on the periphery, churches can perform the act of defence as well as fortresses ...

But notwithstanding Paul's narrower geographical focus, the wider imperial dimension that Procopius captures by his review of the whole empire (less Italy) also features in Paul. We have, for example, the repeated references to the scale of imperial victories from the Near East to Spain as well as, in the final verses of the *Description of the Ambo* (299–301), to the equestrian statue of the emperor to which Procopius also gives prominence in his *Buildings* (1.2.5–12), and which features on the cover of this book. We also possess the repeated references to the Mediterranean-wide sources of the materials for the Great Church.³⁰⁵ If we pursue the Neoplatonic analogy further, we can see Justinian's glory, as depicted by Paul, cascading down, to use the metaphor also employed by the *Dialogue* (5.58–60), to its manifestations in both church and patriarch. Moreover, in doing so, the emperor's radiance illuminates the world. First, we note the poetic *tour de force*, describing the lighting in the church (806ff.). Then, we are told (895–920) how the lights of the church serve as a symbol of the divine light; they illuminate travellers by land like constellations of stars in a cloudless sky, 'unfurling for all a serene heaven of joy' (904). For those sailing to Byzantium, moreover, 'the Divine torch of your church', that is Justinian's church, guides them safely to harbour after the inhospitable currents of the Black Sea (from the north) or the Sea of Marmara (to the south). This finally mutates into that plea for the emperor to live long – and to continue to shed light on both East and West (922). Once again, it may be a poetic or panegyric commonplace that similar language about a church (Hagia Sophia again in Edessa) can recall the 'shining stars of the firmament', or refer, once again in that opening *kontakion*, to Hagia Sophia's 'outstripping in glory even the firmament because of the divine illumination of the sun of truth'.³⁰⁶ But that is not to write off its declamatory effectiveness. How it is done is what really matters. Technique is all.

Yes, there are other differences between Procopius' and Paul's treatments. Nothing in the former, for instance, on Constantinople as the more glorious 'New Rome'. Indeed, nothing on Italy at all. Other differences, however, must reflect problems of 562 unknown to Procopius. Paul, for instance, has more to say about conspiracies against the emperor and the

305 Esp. lines 617–82, also noted in Macrides and Magdalino (1985).

306 For Hagia Sophia in Edessa, line 5, see Mango (1986), 58; for the *kontakion* opening the re-dedication ceremonies for Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, *str.* 6, trans. Palmer (1988).

emperor's mercy: after all, that of Ablabius was very recent, in 562 (25–50). But he also refers (940–49) to the conspiracy of Artabanus and Arsaces in 548, as does Procopius (*Wars* 7.32). Both mention too how these earlier conspirators against the merciful emperor are now generals. Also, Belisarius, in temporary disgrace, goes unmentioned in Paul, although he features briefly in the *Buildings* when Procopius describes the reconquest of North Africa, while Paul's omission has the incidental benefit that Justinian's glory need not be shared with anyone!³⁰⁷ But the biggest differences reflect above all the intensely religious circumstances of the poem's delivery – and the fact that it is a *poem*, and one designed to be declaimed. One, moreover, in which Paul does not merely deploy his technical skills to achieve effects denied even to a writer like Procopius, who often employs a 'high style' of Greek prose, but also avows a determination to echo 'Homer's thundering strains' (617) and imitates the example of Nonnus and Callimachus, as we have already noted on page 85 above.

All this brings us back, once again, to the difficulty of 'reading' the culture, especially the 'high culture', of late antiquity. Had they been present at the first recitation, how would Agapetus and the author of the *Dialogue* have heard Paul? The latter with a frown and pursed lips perhaps? Agapetus, one imagines, might simply have nodded with approval, all worries about the state of empire temporarily forgotten. However, whatever else we may be doubtful about, it is clear that Paul, even when writing in this ecclesiastical context, clearly wishes to situate himself both as an heir of the literary tradition of Greece and as a Roman, at a time when other options, whether of genre or language, were available.³⁰⁸

7. TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

For Agapetus, my translation, the first in English since the sixteenth century, is based on the most recent edition, that of R. Riedinger (Athens, 1995), also now available online in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (TLG). Fortunately, this does not differ significantly from the previous, and, for those unable to access TLG, more accessible standard edition to be found in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* (PG) 86.1, cols. 1163–85 and the basis of all scholarship until now. There is no other complete modern translation into English,

³⁰⁷ *Bldgs.* 1.10.16.

³⁰⁸ Johnson (2006) offers a collection of essays that illuminates the various options of genre and style then available.

although there is an excellent partial translation by Sir Ernest Barker (1957) in his very useful combination of source book and commentary, *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium*, now out of print. Modern German translations can be found, not only in Riedinger and therefore exploiting the most recent edition, but also of the *PG* text in W. Blum (Stuttgart, 1981) and R. Frohne (St Gallen, 1985).

For the *Dialogue*, the original edition of Angelo Mai, in his *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio* (Rome, 1827), 590–699, is the starting point for all subsequent scholarship, though Mai was frank about the inadequacies of the text he restored from the severely damaged palimpsest. All serious work now depends on Carlo Mazzucchi's *Menae Patricii cum Thoma referendario De Scientia Politica Dialogus* (Milan, 1982; 2nd ed. 2002). For his immense labour in producing it, we should all be profoundly grateful. The 2002 edition contains, apart from some textual changes from his 1982 edition, more editorial material on dating and the sources of the present text and its history. Unfortunately for those who only know English, the appended translation is in Italian only, while the introduction and annotations are in Latin. The bibliography is in chronological, not alphabetical order, and, except for some material with a bearing on the text, omits material from before Mazzucchi's own first edition (1982). Beware also that references to the text in the scholarly, secondary literature often refer to the (different) pagination of the earlier, not the otherwise more useful and up-to-date second edition. Both, however, comprise all the currently known text, including that discovered by Behr (1974). There is again a part-translation and commentary by Barker (see above), which is best avoided. He only had access to the Mai edition. In consequence – and understandably – he was baffled to the point of fury by the then available text, whose intellectual merits he accordingly undervalued. The present text is hard going enough. I am not aware of a translation into any other modern European language, including English, apart from that of Mazzucchi.

For the translation of Paul the Silentiary's *Description of Hagia Sophia*, I am indebted to Mary Whitby. She has kindly let me use her own translation, made as part of her 1981 Edinburgh University doctoral thesis, as a basis for what appears here. I hope she is not too disappointed by my translation of it into something closer to modern, standard English. A still more colloquial one would be possible at the price, however, of losing almost entirely any trace of the grandeur of the original. Chapter 3 of Cyril Mango's source book, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire: 312–1453* (1986), also includes translations of much of the primarily 'architectural' sections

of both Paul's *ekphraseis*, including therefore that of the *ambo*, plus other sixth-century and later church descriptions, including Procopius' treatment of Hagia Sophia in his *Buildings* and the eighth- or ninth-century *Narratio de Sancta Sophia*.³⁰⁹ Complete translations of Paul's *ekphraseis* also exist in both Italian and German: the first in Fobelli's edition (Rome, 2005), which also includes the *Ambo*; the latter in an appendix by Veh to his edition of Procopius' *de Aedificiis* (*Buildings*) (Munich, 1977). The Fobelli edition, which focuses on the architectural issues, has the inestimable advantage of being copiously and well illustrated, with an up-to-date bibliography not confined to Italian works. (Friedländer's 1912 edition, repr. 1969, lacks a translation.) On Hagia Sophia itself, we have Mainstone's beautifully illustrated 1985 monograph.

309 Because an accessible English translation of most of these parts of Paul's *ekphraseis* is available in Mango, this book has confined itself to the more overtly panegyric introductory and concluding passages which Mango omits.



AGAPETUS

ADVICE TO THE EMPEROR JUSTINIAN

The Exposition by Agapetus, deacon of the most holy Great Church of God, of heads of advice to the Emperor Justinian.¹

1. Since² you have a dignity beyond all other honour, Emperor,³ honour – beyond all others – God, who dignified you. For it was in the likeness of the Heavenly Kingdom that he gave you the sceptre of earthly rule that you might teach men the protection of justice and drive away the howling of those who rave against it,⁴ just as you are ruled by the laws of justice and rule lawfully those subject to you.⁵

NB The translation, unless indicated, is based on the text of Riedinger (1995).

¹ An introduction found in only one of the three MS traditions. Hence the reference to the ‘Great Church’ (i.e. Hagia Sophia, in Constantinople) is not certain: Bellomo (1906). ‘Exposition’ translates the Greek *ekthesis*, a common short title for this work. In this book, however, ‘Advice’ is the more normal short title. For the identity of Agapetus, see Introduction p. 8.

² For the acrostic made up by the initial (Greek) letters of each paragraph, see Introduction, p. 9.

³ For the relevance of this chapter to the dating of the *Ekthesis*, see Introduction, p. 18, with chs. 4, 17, 20 and 30.

⁴ The metaphor refers to suppressing rabid dogs.

⁵ This analogy of the earthly and heavenly kingdoms – and the emperor’s consequent divine mission – represents Agapetus’ basic requirement of an emperor. It derives, in its Christian form, from Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea: see Introduction, p. 29. For Agapetus, if the heavenly kingdom is the model of the earthly kingdom, it is also the goal of the emperor’s striving; the earthly kingdom becomes the ladder for his ascent to heaven (chs. 59 and 72). The idea of divine bestowal of royal power, or sacral kingship, is not wholly extinct, notwithstanding the decline of absolute monarchy and the doctrine of the divine right of kings, if only as an archaic survival: Queen Elizabeth II (of the UK) was anointed as monarch at her coronation in 1953. She remains ‘Supreme Governor of the Church of England’.

This and later chapters explain how to reach the heavenly kingdom, for example, by exercising justice and teaching it to others – ch. 1; remaining steady and unchanged amid changing circumstances – chs. 11, 13, 33, 34; forgiving those who wrong the emperor – ch. 64. For the most frequently emphasised, *philanthropia* (‘love for man’ or ‘humanity’) and synonyms, see chs. 6, 40, 50 and 40. For the relevance of Agapetus’ approach to Justinian’s actual policies, see Introduction, p. 44. For the Christological overtones of the emperor as

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2. Like a helmsman, the many-eyed intellect⁶ of the emperor remains ever vigilant,⁷ holding secure the rudder of good government and firmly pushing back the torrents of lawlessness, so that the vessel of the universal state may not founder in the waves of injustice.⁸

3. The divine and first lesson we men are taught is: ‘Know thyself’.⁹ Who knows himself, will know God; who knows God, will become like God; who will become like God has become worthy of God. He who does nothing unworthy of God becomes worthy of God, but thinks the things of God, says what he thinks and does what he says.

God’s representative on earth, see chs. 21 and 72 with nn. Note also the emphasis placed on ruling lawfully and in accordance with the laws of justice: that is, on the perceived *legitimacy* of his rule, even though the emperor cannot be compelled to comply with the law: see chs. 27 and 35, with nn. and Introduction, pp. 46–48.

6 ‘With many eyes’ translates the rare word *poluommatos*, applied variously to Argos, a mythical creature with multiple eyes and unsleeping, but also, in patristic texts, to the cherubim.

7 The comparison of government to steering a ship – ‘the ship of state’ – is a commonplace familiar from Plato (*Rep.* 1.341c), but goes back earlier e.g. to the C7 BCE poet, Alcaeus (fr. 46a Diels), which the Roman poet Horace (C1 BCE) took as his model in *Ode* 1.14. It was used by the C10 emperor, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, in advice to his son that Agapetus could have written: ‘[sc. learning] is an especially good thing for you, who are bound to take thought for the safety of all, and to steer and guide the laden ship of the world’ (*On Administering the Empire* 1.68). The nautical analogy resurfaces in ch. 10. The way Agapetus develops this simile – in Greek, the assonances and rhymes make it even more contrived – exemplifies his straining for literary effect. But rhetoric and serious intent, here and elsewhere in the *Advice* and in Byzantine literature more generally, combine to make points more powerfully: here, the recognition of the central, political dependence of good government on the emperor. See also ch. 10, where the emperor’s centrality is more forcibly emphasised, again by a nautical metaphor.

8 Neither here nor elsewhere is any, even legal, limitation placed on the scope of imperial power, other than accountability to God (e.g. ch. 30). There is no suggestion that the emperor’s authority is limited in regard to the Church, which is never mentioned. See the Introduction, pp. 40–43, for the relationship of Agapetus’ approach to Justinian’s ecclesiastical politics. Nor is there reference to other states or rulers – although Justinian has enemies whom he vanquishes with God’s help: ch. 62.

9 The commandment that stood over the entry to the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, regularly quoted in Greek throughout antiquity, even by Romans (e.g. Cicero, *Letter to his brother Quintus* 3.6.7; Juvenal, *Satire* 11.27). Agapetus, in assimilating self-knowledge to the knowledge of God, again interprets a Pagan tradition in a Christian sense – although he is not the first, or only, Christian writer to use this maxim: cf. Evagrius Ponticus (C4): ‘Do you want to know God? Start by knowing yourself!’ (*PG* 95:1305b). For the importance to Agapetus (and the *Dialogue*) of traditions of political theorising going back, through Eusebius and the Church Fathers, to Pagan antiquity, see Introduction, esp. pp. 28ff.

4. Let no one pride himself on the nobility of his ancestors. All men have clay as forefather of their race: those who flaunt themselves in purple and fine linen; those worn out by poverty and disease; those invested with the diadem,¹⁰ [and those lying exposed, seeking alms].¹¹ Let us not therefore flaunt our descent from clay, but let us pride ourselves on the goodness of our ways.¹²

5. Know, you divinely crafted image of piety,¹³ that the more you are thought worthy of great gifts from God, the greater is the return you owe Him. Repay, therefore, your debt of gratitude to your Benefactor; He will accept your debt as a favour and return favour in return for favour.¹⁴ For He himself

10 The band or fillet, originally worn by the kings of Persia (e.g. Xenophon, *The Education of Cyrus* 8.3.13), had, from Plutarch (2.753d) onwards, come to denote kings generally.

11 The clause is omitted in two MSS. The brackets are Riedinger's. The literal meaning is 'lying exposed for alms' (= *dōmata*, a rare word, though found in the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew bible: e.g. Gen. 25.6).

12 For 'clay', see also n. 36. Superficially, a trite observation that what an individual is matters more than their pedigree, though also a reminder of human frailty and transience: cf. ch. 71. In reality, it is a robust defence of Justinian and, given its relevance to the political situation at the beginning of his reign, suggests an early composition date. For Justinian, like his wife, and his uncle and predecessor, Justin I, was vulnerable to charges of being an *arriviste*, an outsider in terms of the Constantinopolitan aristocracy even though he was beholden to them for securing the throne (e.g. Zonaras, *Epitome Historiarum* 15.5.37; Victor Tonnensis, *Chronicle* 1.109). Many of his closest associates, e.g. John the Cappadocian, were similarly vulnerable: see *SH* e.g. 24.13, John the Lydian, *On Magistracies* 3.57ff. For more general resentment of 'new men', see *SH* 20.13ff., John the Lydian, *On Magistracies* 3.26, 3.28, 3.54; also *Dialogue* 5.33 below.

For the strength of senatorial hostility to the emperor at the time of the Nika riot (532), see Procopius, *Wars* 1.25, with Kaldellis (2004), 124ff. Examples of Agapetus' targets here could include, by spectacular contrast, Anicia Juliana (and her allies). In support of her pretensions for her family, she constructed, at some time before 527/8, the greatest church in Constantinople before Justinian rebuilt Hagia Sophia. See Introduction, p. 44.

13 The reference to Justinian as an 'image' reflects a tendency from late antiquity onwards in art, coinage and ceremonial to represent the emperor as statuesque, looking fixedly into the distance, as in an icon. Cf. Amm. Marc.'s description of the entry of Constantius II into Rome in 357 (*Histories* 16.10); or, for the same virtue in a domestic context, Michael Psellus, in the C11, on the death of his daughter. For this and more generally, see Kazhdan and Constable (1982), 61. In his *On Kingship*, arguably the first Christian 'Mirror for Princes', Bishop Synesius of Cyrene (c.370–413) regularly addresses the emperor as 'image' or 'statue': see 18C and 26B in particular. See also n. 37 below for an emperor, Justin II, described as the 'image' (*imago*) of the omnipotent Christ.

14 'Piety' and 'favour'. Agapetus brings out first the importance of this key imperial virtue, piety, in his dedicatory acrostic (see n. 2), as well as here and in chs. 11, 15 and 60. Justinian himself was undoubtedly pious. He took pains to ensure that his piety and 'love for mankind',

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is always the first to dispense favours and repays favours as if they were a debt. But he seeks gratitude from us – not through the proffering of good words, but through the offering of pious deeds.¹⁵

6. Nothing gives a man a better reputation than to be able to do what he wants, but always to want and to do what benefits mankind.¹⁶ Since, therefore, God has endowed you with the power which your goodwill needed to benefit us, always both wish and do as is pleasing to Him who gave it to you.¹⁷

7. Among earthly things, the instability of wealth imitates the course of rivers' currents: for a short time, it flows towards men who think they possess it; but after a short time, it flows away, and departs to others. Only

whether in his ascetic lifestyle, religious policies, personal involvement in legislation and administration and vast building works, were universally noticed. (See, for example, *Bldgs.* 1.66ff. and *SH* 1.13; for 'hands-on government' and pious lifestyle generally, see the *Prefaces* to the *Corpus of Civil Law*; Romanos' *Kontakion* 15 (Hagia Sophia); Paul, *Description*, e.g. 40–59 below; and the mosaics in the apse of the church of San Vitale, Ravenna.

The Gk. word *kharis* is translated not as 'grace', as by Barker (1957), but as 'favour', its concrete manifestation. This brings out that the rewards of piety were not only spiritual, but also material – not least in consolidating goodwill for the emperor's rule – in a culture lacking a sharp distinction between the sacred and the secular. Cf. Corippus' panegyric on Justinian's successor, Justin II (r. 565–78), which represents the emperor, in terms applicable to his predecessor, as the earthly 'image of Christ'. But this accolade, following repeated references to Justin II's piety, is nevertheless in terms of the emperor's *power*. The virtue of piety is in fact more than its own reward, both for Justinian and Justin II, on whom see Corippus, 2.427–28, with Averil Cameron's comments *ad loc.*

15 Henry (1967), 307, points out that good works have their downside, notably when the emperor appropriates revenues for e.g. church building, as opposed to relying on his own resources, correctly citing Evagrius, *EH* 4.30 (with Michael Whitby's [2000] note *ad loc.*). Such behaviour, especially the fiscal policies necessary to sustain it, which we find most trenchantly criticised in Procopius, *SH passim*, may undermine the goodwill it would otherwise gain. Despite his (qualified) approval of the emperor's pious works, Evagrius nevertheless placed Justinian, on his death, in hell (*EH* 5.1). See n. 56. The assonance 'proffer/offer' deliberately echoes one in the Greek: *prophora/prosphora*. See n. 7.

16 'What benefits mankind' translates *philanthropa*. 'Philanthropy' was an attribute long regarded as an essential attribute of good emperors, Pagan and Christian: e.g. Menander Rhetor (late C3), *On Epideictic Speeches* 2.374 (Pagan); Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 4.1–4, 26–28 (Christian, specifically of Constantine). See also chs. 20 and 40 and, for the closely related 'doing good' (*eupoiia*), chs. 7, 19, 38, 43, 44, 48, 53. For Justinian's *philanthropia*, see n. 34.

17 This chapter, in implying that Justinian now has the power to put his good designs into effect, is further evidence for a composition date early in the reign. It also brings out the emperor's role as God's vicegerent. For the sentiment, cf. ch. 53.

the treasure of good deeds remains fixed for those who possess it, since the blessing of good deeds reverts to their doers.

8. You are unapproachable to men because of the height of your kingship here below; yet you are approachable to those in need because of the might of the power above. You open your ears to those besieged by poverty, so that you may find the ear of God open. For as we treat our fellow slaves, so shall we find our Master treating us.¹⁸

9. The soul of the emperor, with its many cares, must be wiped clean like a mirror, so that it may always shine with the rays of God and learn from them how to judge in practical affairs. For nothing makes us see better what is necessary than always keeping our soul pure.

10. As on a voyage,¹⁹ when a sailor makes a mistake, he brings little harm to those sailing with him. But when the helmsman does so, he brings about the destruction of the whole ship. So too with cities: if a subject errs,²⁰ he does not so much harm society as himself. But if the ruler does wrong, then he damages the whole state. Since he will be held severely to account if he should neglect to do anything that is necessary, let him say and do everything with great precision.²¹

11. A wheel of human affairs goes round, now taking them in one direction, now in another, and turning them around. And their inequality lies in the fact that none of the things present remains the same. In the face of this rapid

18 Even *SH* 13.1 praises Justinian's approachability and affability. For the significance of '(fellow) slave', see chs. 64 and 68.

19 For nautical metaphors, see n. 7 above.

20 One of the few specific references to subjects (here, as in ch. 59, literally, 'the ruled'; in chs. 23 and 63 'servants'), other than as e.g. generic recipients of philanthropy. This shows how the text is focused on the activity and duty of the *emperor*.

21 Concern with detail, and not failing to take remedial action wherever he judged necessary, was a hallmark of Justinian's regime: note, for instance, his voluminous and minute personal concern with church matters and legal and administrative reform that characterises both the *Code* and later *Novels*, as well as his theological correspondence in e.g. the *Collectio Avellana*, and Wesche (1991); see Honoré (1978) for Justinian's involvement in legislative drafting. See also n. 14. In the *Dialogue* (5.58), by contrast – and it is highly salient, politically: see Introduction, p. 74 – the emperor is *not*, as a matter of principle, to concern himself with detail or mundane matters generally. For criticisms of Justinian's concern with detail and reluctance to delegate, see *SH* 1.13ff.

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change, mightiest of Emperors, you must, therefore, maintain your pious way of thinking unchanged.²²

12. Turn away from the deceitful words of flatterers as you would from the rapacious habits of crows: these gouge out the eyes of the body, while flatterers blunt the reasonings of the soul and make it impossible to see the truth of things. They either praise what deserves blame, or often blame what is beyond praise. In this way, they commit one of two sins: either praising evil, or despising good.²³

13. The emperor must always be constant in his thinking: to change in response to the changes in affairs is proof of an inconstant intellect. To be firmly rooted in the good, as your pious rule is fixed, and neither be excessively lifted up into boastfulness nor born down into despondency – that is the way of those who have walked safely and keep their soul unshaken.

14. If anyone keeps his thought cleansed of human deceit and sees the worthlessness of his own nature, the shortness and sudden end of earthly life and the filth joined to the flesh, he will never fall into the pit of arrogance, however exalted his station.²⁴

15. More than all the glories of empire, it is the chaplet of piety that adorns the emperor. Wealth passes; glory vanishes.²⁵ But the renown of a life

22 Despite the puzzling choice of words – ‘inequality’ (*anisotes*), for instance – the sense is clear: worldly affairs are changing constantly; do not let this deflect you from your consistent and pious approach to government. The appositeness of this advice, reflected in chs. 13 and 33, derives from, first, the contemporary centrality of the emperor in both linking the community to God, and in providing political continuity and stability in an inevitably changing world (Introduction, p. 38; Maas [1992], 14–18); secondly, Agapetus’ advice to the emperor to keep to his present practice seems a reaction to the consistent charges of the ‘sin’ of innovation – see ch. 1 – brought against the emperor and his closest advisers by conservative critics (e.g. John the Lydian, *On Magistracies*, e.g. 1.1.3, 2.19.9; *SH* 1.24). In response, Justinian often justified policy initiatives in terms of Christian piety and/or consistency: as responses to changing circumstances, or as a ‘renewal’ of ancient traditions and glories (e.g. *CJ* 11.17.18, *Just. Nov.* 13, 28, 49, 69, 73, and 74. Maas [1986]).

23 The first of several warnings against flatterers (see also chs. 22, 31, 32, 56). Cf. Procopius’ accusation (*SH* 13.11 and elsewhere) that Justinian was susceptible to flattery.

24 Ch. 71 for further evidence of Agapetus’ low (Christian) view of human nature.

25 As in the *Dialogue* below, I have normally translated *basileia* (kingship) and its cognates (king, kingly etc.) by ‘imperial’ or ‘emperor’. This usage reflects contemporary C6 political reality better, although it loses the classicising overtones of the archaising ‘king’.

inspired by God stretches to immortal ages, and places beyond oblivion those who possess it.²⁶

16. It seems to me very strange indeed that rich and poor suffer the same harm from different things. The former burst with surfeiting; the latter perish from hunger. The one possesses the ends of the earth; the other has nowhere to place the sole of his foot. So that both may achieve health, they must be treated by the method of addition and subtraction: inequality must be changed to equality.²⁷

17. In your time has been revealed the age of felicity which one of the ancients predicted would be when either philosophers were kings, or kings were philosophers.²⁸ For being a philosopher, you were thought worthy of

26 'The renown of a life inspired by God': Barker (1957) translates *to kleos tes entheou politeias* as referring to the glory of god-like government. But Henry (1967), 299, sees it as a reference to the fame of a religious life. Both readings are possible, and the former is arguably more appropriate to a work of political advice. Agapetus also uses *politeia* in the sense of government in ch. 2. However, it seems less common than the latter reading, 'life', in Christian texts: *PGL s.v. politeia*. With some hesitation, therefore, I have opted for the 'Christian' interpretation here.

27 A technical medical metaphor referring to the giving or withholding of nourishment to patients on a diet: cf. Hippocrates, *Aphorisms* 1.19. Agapetus exploits it to stress not just giving to the poor, a Christian *topos* (or commonplace) but *taking from the rich* (cf. chs. 44, 51 and 60 below). This contrasts with contemporary upper-class, secular writers, who were acutely sensitive, except when making a polemical point against Justinian, to the financial sufferings, mainly through taxation, of the rich (e.g. *SH* 22.39–40, 27ff.; John the Lydian, *On Magistracies* 3.70; Evagrius, *EH* 4.30). Christian writers, however, expressed similar concerns for the poor to Agapetus throughout late antiquity – often bitterly (e.g. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 61, 66, in the C4; in the C6, Severus, *Homilies* 19, 23; Romanos, e.g. in *Hymns* 53 and 59; Leontius, *Homilies* 3, 7 and 10; and saints' *Lives*, including especially those of Theodore of Sykeon or John the Almsgiver, both early C7). Justinian understood the (political) importance of promoting his philanthropy and charity: e.g. the altar-cloth in Hagia Sophia portrayed hospitals and churches he had built. Paul, *Description* 755ff.; see Procopius' panegyric *Bldgs.* (e.g. 2.10.1ff.), for similar works both in and outside the capital.

28 The idea of 'philosopher-king' is not confined at this period to Agapetus. For example, the same tribute is paid to the Gothic king of Italy, Theodoric (r. 471–526), by his successor (Cassiodorus, *Variae* 9.24.8); the link between philosophy and kingship is fundamental to the *Dialogue*, Bk 5, below. Agapetus does not go into detail, here or later, about Justinian's alleged qualifications as a philosopher; he merely glosses the word 'philosophy' literally, that is, as 'love of wisdom'.

It was common practice not to name a specific source. Here Plato, *Rep.* 5.473d, is meant. Assuming an early date for the *Advice* (on which see Introduction, p. 18), the omission of Plato's name could simply be prudence during a persecution of 'Hellenes' (= Pagans), Jews,

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becoming emperor, and, as emperor, you have not desisted from philosophy.²⁹ If the love of wisdom constitutes philosophy, and the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God,³⁰ which you have continually in your breast, then it is clear that what I say is true.³¹

18. I define you truly as an emperor because you are able both to rule and master pleasures, because you are wreathed with the garland of temperance and clothed in the purple of justice. All other power has death as its successor, but such rule endures for ever. The first dissolves in this world; the other is protected from eternal punishment.³²

heretics and others, including homosexuals (*CJ* 1.5, Mal., *Chronicle* 449), or during the period around 529 when the Platonic School of Athens came under attack (Mal., *Chronicle* 451).

The reference may also be intended to counter criticisms of ‘intellectual philistinism’ (= *agroikia*: on which Zonaras, 14.6.31–32) on the part of the emperor, given this and other repression at the start of his reign. However, there is abundant evidence of *agroikia*, including further high-profile purges of ‘deviants’ in the 540s and in 562. On these, see e.g. *Just. Nov.* 77, 141 (homosexuals); Mal., *Chronicle* 491 (persecution of ‘Hellenes’, with the burning of books, pictures, and the destruction of statues of ‘their loathsome gods’); and John of Ephesus, in Ps. Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, *Chronicle* 76–77 (further purges of [Pagan] intellectuals). For the hostility to, and down-grading of, ‘Hellenic’ culture more generally, see Kaldellis (2004).

29 A flattering oversimplification of how Justinian succeeded his uncle, Justin I, as emperor: see Vasiliev (1950), ch. 1; Croke (2007).

30 cf. Ps. 111.10 (= 110.10 in Septuagint): ‘The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord.’ Also Prov. 1.7: ‘The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.’ Note here and later (e.g. ch. 48), the emphasis on ‘fear’ as integral to government: cf. Theophylact Simocatta 1.1.19 cited in n. 61. Agapetus understands there is more to ruling than simply cultivating goodwill.

31 It is misleading to regard Justinian as a philosopher in any technical sense: see n. 28 above. However, Justinian *did* take a lively interest in doctrinal questions (and their political implications) both before his accession (see his letters to Pope Hormisdas in *Coll. Avell.*) and afterwards – even publicly debating theological issues (Lim [1995], 105), writing theological treatises (e.g. texts trans. in Wesche [1991]), and in his legislation. By the sixth century, philosophy had also come to denote ‘love of (sc. Divine) wisdom’: illiterate ascetics, holy men – even chaste women – could be described as philosophers. John the Baptist is only one example. See Introduction, p. 33, for source. (See *PGL* under *philosophia* /*philosophos* for examples.) Contrast the elaborate, unambiguously Platonising model of the emperor argued for in the *Dialogue*, Bk. 5.

32 Temperance (*sophrosune*) and justice (*dikaiosune*) are two key virtues with a long pedigree in Greek ethical and political thought: for the former, see e.g. *Phdr.* 237e and *Smp.* 196c; Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.* 3.10–12, 1117b13–1119b13; for the latter, Plato, *Republic passim* with Annas (1981); Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.* 5.1–11, 1129a–1138b2 (for the concept), *Politics*, esp. Bk 5, 1301a–1315a (for when the criteria for a just state are not met). Cf. n. 5 above. They also comprise two of the four ‘royal’ virtues (or ‘political’ virtues in the Platonic tradition) singled out in the C3 by Menander Rhetor, 2.373, whose work remained influential in all subsequent periods. (The other two are courage, *andreia*, and practical wisdom or prudence, *phronesis*.)

19. If you wish to reap honour from all men, become the common benefactor of all. For nothing so attracts goodwill as the favour of good deeds given to those in need. But reverence which arises from fear is dressed-up flattery, which under the fictitious name of honour deceives those who rely on it.

20. Your rule over us is justly venerated because to enemies it shows its power, but to subjects it dispenses benevolence.³³ Having subdued the former by the power of arms, it is overcome by the unarmed love of your own people.³⁴ In the distance between a wild animal and a sheep can be reckoned the difference between both.³⁵

21. In his bodily essence, the emperor is the equal of every man, but in the power of his rank he is like God over all men. He has no one on earth who is higher than he. Like a man, therefore, he must not be puffed up; like God, he must not be angry. For if he is honoured for his divine image, he is nevertheless bound to his earthly³⁶ image through which he is taught his equality with other men.³⁷

Henry (1967), 299, is wrong to see the reference to ‘temperance’ (= ‘moderation’) as ‘purely personal’, not least because it is linked here with the indisputably political virtue of justice.

33 Assuming the text belongs to the early 530s, a possible reference to the ‘Eternal Peace’ with Persia (*Wars* 1.22), in 532; if later, it may refer to the reconquest of Africa (534) and Sicily (535–36). The reconquest of Italy was not completed until 561, with the fall of Verona.

34 ‘Love’ here, and in chs. 50 and 56, translates *agape*, traditionally ‘(Christian) love’. In Agapetus, it has no specifically Christian overtones. *Philanthropia* (and cognates), here translated ‘benevolence’, literally means ‘love for man’. Acting benevolently (or humanely) will both generate good repute and please God, who gave the emperor the power so to act (ch. 6). God will reward his man- (and God-) loving intentions: ch. 50. Specific elements of benevolence include treating everyone, friend and foe, alike (ch. 41), being merciful (ch. 37) – and, arguably, since the precise word is not used – redistributing wealth (ch. 16 with n. 27).

For the importance of *philanthropia* in late antique thought, including amongst such Pagans as Themistius, Libanius and the emperor Julian, see Henry (1967), 301–02. Agapetus’ use of the term, which effectively replaces *agape*, is another example of how Pagan virtues have by this period become integrated into the new Christian, hegemonic ideology. Cf. n. 16 above.

35 In striving to be epigrammatic, Agapetus often becomes obscure. The meaning, however, is that the difference between friend and foe is as great as that between wild beast and sheep.

36 My translation follows the *PG* text: *eikoni khoikei*, literally ‘earthly image’, with ‘earthly’ used in the literal sense of ‘of earth or clay’, a probable echo of e.g. 1 Cor. 15.47: cf. ch. 4. Riedinger (in *TLG*) reads *konei khoikei*, ‘earthly dust’. This could be correct, but it loses a rhetorical antithesis of a kind dear to Agapetus between the ‘divine’ and ‘earthly’ *images*.

37 This chapter encapsulates the two core messages of the work: the emperor, through the divine nature of his office, is the equivalent of God on earth; but the emperor is, ultimately, only human like the rest of us. Cf. these sentiments with Corippus, 2.427–28: ‘Christ gave

22. Receive those who wish to give you good advice, but not those who always hasten to flatter. For the one sees what is truly necessary; the other looks to what is pleasing to the powerful. They imitate the shadows which follow men's bodies, and agree with what they say.³⁸

23. Treat your servants as you pray that your Master will treat you. As we hear, so shall we be heard; as we see, so shall we be seen by the Divine and all-seeing eye. Let us, therefore, first pay an advance of mercy for mercy, that we in turn may receive like for like.³⁹

24. As a good mirror shows the reflexion of faces as their originals are – cheerful of the cheerful; sullen of the sullen – so does the just judgement of God correspond to our deeds: whatever has been done by us, he repays us in kind.

25. Consider what must be done slowly; execute what you have decided quickly, since unconsidered action in business is too risky. If anyone reflects on the evils of thoughtlessness, he will understand well the advantages of good counsel, like the blessing of health after the experience of illness. So must you, most gracious Emperor, search diligently through wise counsel and intense prayer for what will benefit the world.

26. You will best administer your good kingship if you strive to oversee everything and allow nothing to escape notice. For there is nothing small for you, however small it appears in comparison with your affairs: even a light word of the emperor's carries great force amongst everyone.⁴⁰

the rulers of the world power over all things. He is omnipotent, while he [*sc.* Justin II] is the image of the Omnipotent'. Talk of God's representative (or imitation) on earth has, almost certainly, Christological implications. Here, the emphasis on the emperor's consubstantiality with, but superiority to, other humans, and on his simultaneous (here quasi-) divine status, echoes contemporary Christological debate whose central issue was the relationship of God to humanity (including His own humanity). This intersection of the political and the theological is developed by Brown (1992), 152–58. I am grateful to Phil Booth for this suggestion.

38 On the dangers of flattery, cf. chs. 19, 31, 32, 56.

39 For Agapetus' likening of the relation between God and man, including the emperor, as that of master and slave, see ch. 68, n. 80. Also striking is the mercenary calculation which here enters into man's relationship with God.

40 Nothing, that is, is too trivial for the emperor. For a contrasting, more limited role of the emperor, confined effectively to high policy, see *Dialogue* 5.58.

27. Impose on yourself the necessity of keeping the laws, since you have on earth no one able to compel you. You will thus display the majesty of the laws by revering them yourself above all others, and it will be clear to your subjects that acting unlawfully is not without danger.⁴¹

28. Consider sinning and not hindering sinners to be the same. For if in society someone lives lawfully, but tolerates those who live unlawfully, he is judged by God as their accomplice in evil. If you wish to be doubly esteemed, honour above others those who do the finest things, but censure those who do the worst.⁴²

29. It is a great advantage, I think, to avoid associating with the wicked. He who always associates with evil men must either learn or suffer evil; he who passes his life with good men either learns to imitate what is fine, or is taught to reduce his vices.

41 Cf. ch. 1 for the all-important link between the emperor and the law. Legitimate legal authority rests on a shared belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those exercising authority under those rules to issue commands (Weber [1968], 212–13). It is, therefore, opposed to tyranny. Yet Roman law held that the emperor was not himself subject to the law, and in *Just. Nov.* 105.4, though not in the *Corpus* proper, Justinian represents himself as the ‘living law’ (*nomos empsukhos*). To counter accusations of tyranny, two earlier (Pagan) emperors, Severus and Antoninus, had accordingly ruled that ‘granted that we are not bound by laws, nevertheless we live according to the laws’. Justinian cited this ruling in his *Institutes* (2.17.8), his textbook for all new lawyers, to help promote the legitimacy of his rule. Justinian’s professed commitment to the rule of law, and his role as God’s collaborator in its reform and promulgation, in ways consonant with Agapetus’ recommendations, can be seen in the *Constitutions* (from 528–34), comprising the *Prefaces* to his *CIC*. See also Dagron (2003), ch. 1; Harries (1999); Honoré (1978). Note, however, the contrast between Agapetus, for whom the law is self-imposed constraint by the emperor, and *Dialogue* 5.45ff., where the imperial office is itself embedded in a legal framework: see Introduction, pp. 43–44.

42 Agapetus opposes the liberal doctrine that accords individuals moral freedom (except where others may be harmed). Following the more rigorous practice of earlier Christian emperors, Justinian similarly legislated in areas that, in the West, would now generally be regarded as private matters: e.g. adultery (*Just. Nov.* 117, 134); homosexuality (*Just. Nov.* 77, 141); and, above all, religion (e.g. *CJ* 1.1–13): some 33 *Novels* are also devoted to ecclesiastical matters. In legislation on morals, either the sin itself or its toleration was regarded as likely to incur divine punishment (e.g. *Just. Nov.* 77). It might also represent a (punishable) failure of the emperor in his sacred duty to secure religious uniformity and extirpate Paganism (e.g. *CJ* 1.5.18). Informers could be actively encouraged (*CJ* 1.5, *Just. Nov.* 132); they were apparently also a more general menace (*SH* 1.1). Notice that while the emperor is accountable to God, including for his servant’s misdeeds, he is not accountable to any earthly authority – although, sensibly, he should seek to rule by popular consent (ch. 35).

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30. Having been entrusted by God with the empire of the world,⁴³ do not employ wicked men in the administration of affairs. For all the evil that they do, he who has given them the power will have to render his account to God. Let the advancement of officials, therefore, come about in conjunction with their close scrutiny.⁴⁴

31. I regard as equal evils both being enraged by the misdeeds of enemies and being beguiled by the flattery of friends. One must nobly resist both and not depart from impropriety: neither taking revenge on the unreasonable enmity of the one, nor rewarding the feigned benevolence of the other.

32. Consider as your truest friends not those who praise everything you say, but those who are keen to do everything with a balanced judgement; who rejoice with you at successes, but are cast down by their opposite. For these truly show proof of honest friendship.⁴⁵

33. Let not the pomp of this earthly dominion change your noble judgement. But, as one holding an authority which perishes, keep your mind unchanged

43 Justinian is entrusted here by God with the rule of the whole world (*enkosmion basileian*) as in ch. 1. See Paul, *Description* 10ff., for a similar vision of Justinian as world ruler.

44 Bitter criticism of many of the emperor's closest associates is to be found in e.g. both Procopius (*SH passim*) and John the Lydian, who denounces John the Cappadocian (*On Magistracies* 3.57) and laments the decline of 'men of letters' in the civil service (*On Magistracies* 3.58). An important demand of the Nika rioters was the dismissal of John, Tribonian and others (e.g. *Wars* 1.24; *Chronicon Paschale* s.a. <532>). Such hostility reflected a more widespread resentment at the preferment of talented outsiders to high office, and their ability to get taxes in. (For upper-class hostility to Justinian – and Agapetus' implicit rejection of their position – see ch. 4. See too *Dialogue* 5.33, which argues for keeping 'new men' in their place.) Even Procopius concedes that his *bête noire*, John, was the 'ablest man of his time' (*Wars* 1.24ff., 25.6, 3.10).

In fact, the emperor's closest colleagues were often of great ability: in addition to John, they included the law reformer, Tribonian, as well as generals like Belisarius and Narses, while professionals, such as lawyers, were actively encouraged to join the civil service (*JInst. Preface* 7 = *C. Imp. Maiestatem* 7). But administrative competence could not redeem them in the eyes of such authors or of other 'wealthy aristocrats and intellectual snobs': Honoré (1978), 13. The imperial administration was no meritocracy, but steps were regularly taken to eradicate financial and other abuses: the wide-ranging, reforming *Just. Nov.* 8 (535) is the best example. The oath prescribed there for all new magistrates shows the high standards to which they were expected to conform. But while the emperor's accountability to God is stressed throughout this work, there is no suggestion of accountability to the *people* (or anyone else) or of *popular sovereignty*. See also ch. 35 below.

45 For the evils of flattery, see also 19, 22, 31, 56.

in changeable affairs: be neither elated in times of joy, nor depressed in times of sadness.⁴⁶

34. Just as gold is transformed by art now this way, now that and modelled into different kinds of ornaments, but remains what it is and undergoes no change – so also you, most glorious emperor, exchanging one office for another before attaining the very highest honour,⁴⁷ remain the same: not dealing with the same affairs, but with your mind unalterably fixed on the good.

35. Consider yourself to reign safely when you rule willing subjects. For the unwilling subject rebels when he has the opportunity. But he who is ruled by the bonds of goodwill is firm in his obedience to his ruler.⁴⁸

36. In order that you may have the might of your kingship celebrated in song,⁴⁹ think it right to have the same anger against yourself when you err as you have against your subjects when they sin. No one has the strength to

46 Cf. ch. 13.

47 I.e. the throne.

48 The most salient chapter in the treatise? No endorsement of popular sovereignty, but a political maxim of universal application and profound importance, whose truth Justinian painfully experienced during the Nika riot (532). Agapetus recognises that fear of the emperor has value (ch. 48). But goodwill, resting on the perceived *legitimacy* of the ruler is, for Agapetus and his contemporaries generally (cf. *Dialogue*, e.g. 5.45ff.), essential in the long run. Justinian accordingly took enormous pains, during a reign marked by intense social conflicts, other disasters and challenges to his rule (see Introduction, pp. 2–4), to project it as legitimate: through legislation and charitable works – which Agapetus stresses – or Roman imperial tradition, well-advertised military (and other) success under God, or by promoting religious uniformity and suppressing heresy and Paganism – which last three Agapetus omits. (Rubin [1960], 122–68; Bell ([forthcoming]). Chs. 36 and 37 reinforce this message from slightly different angles. Paul's *Description* is a superb example of the projection of this imperial 'message'.

49 'Celebrated in song' is a literal translation of *aoidimos*, a word with this sense going back to Homer. It is a strong, though by no means empty expression, given the prevalence of imperial panegyrics, including in verse, throughout antiquity, and justifies a translation that goes beyond merely 'celebrated'. In our period, Priscian wrote a Latin verse panegyric, between 503 and 513, of the emperor Anastasius (r. 491–518); John the Lydian wrote a, now lost, prose panegyric of Justinian, probably in Latin (*On Magistracies* 3.28); Procopius of Gaza wrote another in prose to the same emperor. Corippus' Latin poem, *In Praise of Justin II*, celebrates the accession of Justinian's successor, while Justinian features in both that poem and in Paul the Silentiary's panegyric *Description of Hagia Sophia*, where the re-dedicated church is described as one where 'God and the emperor [sc. Justinian] are honoured' (2, my italics). For panegyrics in late antiquity more generally, see Introduction, pp. 80ff.; Mary Whitby (1998).

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discipline someone with such power as yours – unless his own reasoning is aroused by the sinner himself.

37. He who has attained great authority, let him imitate the giver of that authority according to his ability. For he bears in some way the image of God, who is above all, and through Him possesses rule over all, and in this he will best imitate God if he thinks nothing is to be preferred to mercy.⁵⁰

38. Let us store up for ourselves the wealth of good works beyond gold and precious stones. This both delights us here with the hope of future enjoyment, and there sweetens⁵¹ us with the experience of the hoped for blessedness. Since what now surrounds us is nothing to us, let it not give us pleasure.⁵²

39. Be eager to reward with more splendid gifts those who carry out your orders with goodwill. In this way, you will increase the enthusiasm of the good and teach the wicked to unlearn their evil.⁵³ To regard as worthy of the same rewards those who have not done the same things is quite unlawful.

40. Kingship is the most honoured of all things. This is especially so when he who is invested with this power inclines not to wilfulness but looks

50 A feature of Justinian's reign, which runs counter to Procopius' allegations in his *SH*, is the relative clemency the emperor allegedly displayed, e.g. after the Nika riot (532), and to many conspirators against him: e.g. in 562 (Paul, *Description* 40ff., who launches into a poetic riff on Justinian's mercy). This clemency, also stressed in the *Bldgs.*, did not, however, extend to religious deviants of various kinds, some of whom burned themselves in their churches rather than submit (*SH* 11.14ff.). More important, in terms of Agapetus' conception of the emperor, this is perhaps the clearest articulation of the principle, implicit in chs. 1, 37 and elsewhere, that he is, or ought to be the 'imitation of God' (*mimesis theou*). What this entails is progressively set out throughout the whole work. (See also Introduction, pp. 37ff.) It is also fundamental to the discussion of the emperor's role in the *Dialogue*, Bk 5; there, in contrast to Agapetus, it is shown to rest on the emperor's philosophical understanding of (Platonist) 'political philosophy'.

51 *Kataglukainonta*, 'sweetening' – an unusual word, although used by the medical writer, Galen (14.753, ed. Kühn).

52 Another highly compressed chapter: good deeds afford, on earth, pleasurable expectations of heaven; in heaven, they let us taste blessedness. Be indifferent, therefore, to earthly wealth. For the biblical reference, see n. 79.

53 To the outrage of Procopius, John the Lydian and Evagrius (*SH* 21; *On Magistracies* 3.57ff.; *EH* 4.30), Justinian's chief lieutenants were well rewarded and were – possibly as a result – efficient and enthusiastic (*SH*, esp. 21.14–15). Whether Agapetus is making a general point or simply lobbying on behalf of the emperor's partisans (and himself?) is less clear.

towards fairness. He turns away from inhumanity as something bestial, and exhibits benevolence as something divine.⁵⁴

41. Do not distinguish between your friends and foes when giving judgement. Neither favour those who wish you well on account of their well-wishing, nor resist those who are enemies because of their hatred. It is equally absurd to give a favourable verdict to the unjust man, even though he is a friend, and an unfavourable one to the just man, even though he is an enemy. The evil is the same in both cases, even if it is found in opposite circumstances.

42. Judges in practical affairs must listen attentively. A just decision is hard to capture; it easily escapes those who do not pay close attention. If they put to one side the speakers' eloquence and the persuasiveness of what is said, but plunge into the depths of the underlying thinking, they will thereby bring to the surface what they seek and avoid two mistakes: they themselves will neither betray the good, nor allow others to do so.⁵⁵

43. Even if the number of your virtuous actions equals that of the stars, you will never exceed the Divine goodness. Whatever a man offers to God from his own possessions, he offers Him what is His. Just as a man cannot overtake his shadow in the sun, which always stays in front of him however fast he hurries, so men cannot exceed the unsurpassable Divine goodness with their good works.

44. The wealth of good works is inexhaustible. It is acquired in giving; it is collected through their dispersal. With this wealth in your soul, most munificent emperor, give liberally to all who ask of you, for you will receive infinite reward when the moment comes for repayment of your deeds.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ See n. 34 for 'benevolence'.

⁵⁵ Note the strikingly metaphorical language both here (plunging below the surface) and in ch. 43 (a man's failing to outrun his shadow). For flatterers likened to a man's shadow, see ch. 22. Whether such vivid images made the advice more palatable or simply more memorable remains moot. Likewise whether such imagery had roots in popular diatribe.

⁵⁶ A further chapter, like ch. 45 below, exhorting and extolling imperial liberality, whose prominence in Agapetus reflects its wider salience: cf. ch. 6 with nn. The rewards could be worldly and political, in terms of cultivating goodwill, or establishing legitimacy as a philanthropic emperor. They could also be other-worldly: the C12 Miaphysite writer, Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* 9.34, preserves a story of how a Holy Man saw a vision of a great fire intended for Justinian (for his ecclesiastical policies), but from which an angel explained he had

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45. Having obtained your kingship by God's command,⁵⁷ imitate Him through good works, since you were born amongst those able to do good, and you are not amongst those who seek to receive good. The availability of an abundance of wealth means there is no obstacle to good works for the poor.⁵⁸

46. As the eye is implanted in the body, so is the emperor fitted into the world – given by God to collaborate with Him in conferring benefits.⁵⁹ He must, therefore, take thought for all men, as for his own limbs, so that they make progress in things good, and do not stumble in things evil.⁶⁰

47. Consider that never to wrong any of your subjects is the most secure protection of your safety. For he who wrongs no one, does not suspect anyone. But if doing no wrong affords security, being a benefactor does so much more. For this gives security without betraying goodwill.

48. Be to your subjects, most pious emperor, both formidable through the pre-eminence of your power and loveable through the provision of good

been spared on account of his good works, in this case church building. We may infer from this story (which Evagrius, *EH* 4.18, and 30, complements by noting how Justinian's lavish building activities partly offset his perceived rapacity – though they did not finally save him from Hell) that such activity softened opposition in his lifetime. Cf. Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow* 175, in which Mary, Jesus' mother, cannot secure, on behalf of a suppliant, God's agreement to punish the emperor Zeno because of his almsgiving. See also n. 15.

57 Literally, 'by the nod of God'. A further clear statement of the emperor's appointment by God.

58 For the political salience – not just the moral or spiritual benefit – of constructing a 'constituency of the poor' from which bishops as well as emperors might benefit, see Brown (2002) *passim*. For the ever-widening scope of episcopal activity and power in late antiquity, see Rapp (2005a), esp. Part 2. For someone in Justinian's position, encountering hostility on his accession from a significant section of the upper classes – see Bell (forthcoming) – a popular constituency was of particular value. To build such a constituency in his rise to power, he cultivated the 'Blue' circus faction, whose influence, like that of the factions more generally, extended throughout the empire (*SH* 7; *Wars* 1.24; *SH* 29.26–38, on empire-wide factional networks).

59 The trope of the emperor as God's collaborator was greatly favoured by Justinian himself: in, for example, his legislative reforms, e.g. *C. Deo Auctore*; in panegyric, e.g. *Bldgs.* 1.1.25, or Paul, *Description* 5ff. Paul even describes the late empress, Theodora, as enjoying the rare favour of freedom of speech (*parrhesia*) with God in Heaven (*Description* 60).

60 Reading *prokoptosi* for 'making progress' and *proskoptosi* for 'stumbling' – a play on words typical of Agapetus, but lost in the MSS, which read *proskoptosi* in both cases, though Riedinger has it right.

works. Do not despise fear on account of love, nor neglect love on account of fear, but possess a mildness that is not to be despised, and a fierceness that is easily despised.⁶¹

49. What you lay down as law for your subjects in words, you demonstrated beforehand by your deeds in order that your good life should be at one with your words of persuasion. For thus will you demonstrate that your power is of good repute: by speaking as you act, and acting as you speak.

50. Love more, most serene emperor, those suppliants who seek favours from you than those who are keen to offer you gifts: to these you become a debtor owing a return; but the former make God your debtor, for He claims as his own what is given to suppliants and repays with good rewards your God-loving and benevolent intention.⁶²

51. It is the function of the sun to illuminate the creation with his rays. It is the virtue of a ruler to take pity on those in need. But a pious emperor is brighter than the sun, for the latter gives way to the succession of night, whereas he does not yield to the rapacity of evil men, but with the light of truth puts to the question the secrets of injustice.⁶³

61 Even though expressed in paradoxical language, Agapetus prudently recognises, despite the emphasis placed elsewhere on ‘winning hearts and minds’ (e.g. chs 35 and 47), that coercion/fear is indispensable to government (e.g. in the maintenance of public order). However, because it is ‘easily despised’, and may generate the lack of consent that can lead to rebellion (ch. 35), it must be accompanied by measures aiming at goodwill. The same thought emerges in a speech from the dying emperor Tiberius II (r. 578–82) to his successor found in Theophylact Simocatta’s *History* 1.1.19. Justinian clearly knew this, while the words *phobos/phoberos*, ‘fear/fearful’, used here by Agapetus regularly recur in the sources in describing the impact of imperial policy: e.g. in reprisals for rioting in Antioch, Caesarea and Alexandria (Mal., *Chronicle* 398, 487–88; *SH* 26.35); religious and moral enforcement against heretics, homosexuals, or ‘Hellenes’ (*SH* 11.14–17; Mal., *Chronicle* 449). For official encouragement of informers, see n. 42 above. For the classic denunciation of state terror, see *SH* 1.1; also Harries (1999), 145, for examples of both the love and fear of God; Matthews (1989), 256–62, for terror in government. For ‘mildness’ (*hemerotes/hemeros*), see also ch. 52.

62 Echo of Matt. 25.40? For another formulation of the idea that whatever you give belongs to God, see ch. 43.

63 Chs. 51 and 52 offer examples of panegyric language, both extravagantly so (comparing the emperor to the sun: ch. 51); in more standard terms found elsewhere (e.g. in Paul, *Description*, below; or in the C3 book of rhetorical advice attributed to Menander Rhetor, *Epideictic Speeches* 2).

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52. Their office adorned emperors before you. But you, mightiest one, have made yours more splendid by tempering the majesty of your power with mildness, and conquering with goodness the fear of those who approach you. Accordingly, all who seek mercy come to anchor in the harbour of your tranquillity. Delivered from the waves of poverty, they offer up to you hymns of thanks.

53. By as much as you excel everyone in dominion, by so much strive to outshine them in deeds. Expect that men will require good deeds from you in proportion to the magnitude of your power. In order therefore that you may be proclaimed victor by God with the garland of unconquerable kingship, obtain the crown of good works to the poor.⁶⁴

54. Consider, before giving a command, what you want, so that you may graciously⁶⁵ order what is right. The tongue is a slippery organ and represents a very great danger to the careless. But if you set a pious intellect over it as if it were a music-master, then the all-harmonious song of virtue will strike up.

55. The ruler must be sharp in all things, especially in reaching judgement on difficult issues, but exceedingly slow to wrath. Since the complete absence of anger does not earn respect, let him both be moderately angry and not angry: the first, so that he may check the impulse of the wicked; the second, so that he may [track down the motives for murders.]⁶⁶

56. In the keen council chamber of your heart, scrutinise carefully the characters of your associates that you may accurately distinguish between those who serve with love, and those who flatter deceitfully. For many feign

⁶⁴ An allusion to the proclamation of a winner at, e.g. the Olympic Games, for which a garland was the prize.

⁶⁵ Reading, with Riedinger, *euphronos* ('graciously', 'reasonably') for *PG's emphronos* ('rationally', 'with understanding'). More than just an exhortation, therefore, to think carefully before issuing orders, Agapetus seems to be reminding the emperor that *how* a command is given is often as important as the command itself.

⁶⁶ The antithesis here does not translate well into English. The Greek word *oxus*, here translated 'sharp', has a primary meaning of 'quick', contrasting with *bradus*, 'slow'. However, it carries a secondary meaning of 'keen' or 'sharp' – which last I have preferred since, in English, it has overtones of speed, as in 'look sharp about it!' The last clause remains obscure, the text disputed. I follow that of Riedinger, which implies that a calm judge will be better able to winkle out the facts than one who loses his temper.

goodwill, bringing great harm to those who trust them.⁶⁷

57. When you hear a proposal that could be useful, do not simply receive it in your hearing but accept it also in your actions. For in this way the power of the emperor is glorified: when he either sees on his own what is to be done, or does not overlook what has been discovered by another. He learns it without embarrassment and gives it effect forthwith.

58. A citadel secured by unbreachable walls looks down on the enemies who besiege it. Your pious empire, walled by acts of charity and with prayers for towers, becomes impregnable to the missiles of your foes, and erects celebrated trophies <of your victories> against them.⁶⁸

59. Use fittingly your kingdom here below so that it may become a ladder for you to the glory above.⁶⁹ Those who rule well the one are, together with

67 For the dangers of flattery, see also chs. 19, 22, 31 and 32.

68 Another highly compressed chapter. The phrase in < > is my addition to help bring out the sense. In comparing Justinian's 'pious empire' to a fortress, one may see an analogy with the most recent walls and towers of the city of Constantinople itself (built under the Emperor Theodosius c.446). These resisted or deterred numerous attackers, starting from the Huns, until the Fourth Crusade in 1204. But note also, for the military efficacy of piety etc., *Just. Nov.* 133.5. Here Justinian asserts that the prayers of monks will ensure the well-being of the state, including its army. See also both the *Akathistos Hymn* 23.13 (possibly as early as the C5, according to Peltomaa [2001], 113–14) and Romanos' *Kontakion* 1.23, where Mary, Jesus' mother, is described as an 'unbreachable wall' and 'strong defence'. Cf. for a Pagan alternative, Zosimus, *New History* 5.6, written around 500, who claims that it was Athene Promachus who saved Athens from the Goths in 394 CE i.e. not Mary!

The last clause denotes the ancient Greek practice, following a battle, of the victorious side's erecting a memorial – 'trophy' (*tropaion*) – on the spot. It could refer to any of the military successes of the earlier part of Justinian's reign from the defeat of Slav raiders (530), or the 'Eternal Peace' with Persia (532) to the conquest of Africa (534). Justinian attached in propaganda terms extraordinary importance throughout his reign to this last: note Belisarius' triumph in 534 following the conquest of Africa (*Wars* 4.9), when the commander prostrated himself before the emperor, and the mosaic representation in the *Chalke* (the bronze palace gate) erected shortly afterwards: *Bldgs.* 1.10.16ff., or Paul, *Description* 10ff., and elsewhere. These military references suggest a composition in the early 530s, contemporaneous with these victories.

Note the use again of *aoidimos*, celebrated (in song)': ch. 36, n. 49 above. In fact, Justinian's victory memorial in the *Chalke* was celebrated, albeit in prose, by Procopius (see ref. above).

69 Superbly depicted in an icon of the Heavenly Ladder of St John Climacus, dating from the Monastery of St Catherine on Sinai (or Constantinople?) in the C12: plate 323, in Cormack and Vassilaki (2008). This illustrates a treatise by St John Climacus (lit. 'of the ladder') who lived from c.579–650. The text tells of vices to avoid, and virtues to acquire in order to reach

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this one, judged worthy of the other.⁷⁰ Those who rule well here display paternal love for those they rule, and receive in return from them the fear due to a ruler. Thus they bring their faults under control by threats; and not by inflicting on them the test of punishment.⁷¹

60. The cloak of beneficence is an imperishable garment and charity to the poor is an imperishable robe. He who wishes to be a pious king must adorn his soul with such raiment. For he who is clad in the purple robe of love for the destitute is also judged worthy of the heavenly kingdom.⁷²

61. Having received the sceptre of kingship from God, think how you will please Him who gave it to you. And as you have been honoured by Him above all men, hasten to reverence Him more than others. He regards this as the greatest of honours if you see those moulded by Him as Him, and render full payment for your debts in good works.⁷³

God. The metaphor is, however, both older than this and very popular. It was, for example, used by the C4 Cappadocians (Basil of Caesarea etc.) and others pre-Climacus; see *PGL* under *klimax* ('ladder') for examples.

70 'The other' i.e. heaven.

71 We should take Agapetus to mean exactly what he says when he writes of fear. Ch. 48 (and n. 61) also recognises that fear is indispensable to good government, e.g. as deterrence. Nor should we allow some gentler modern conceptions to obscure the tougher one Agapetus shared with contemporaries and predecessors, Christian and Pagan. For late antique justifications of fear as beneficial to the operations of the state, and within families when wielded by a lawful authority – state, father, husband or God – see Harries (1999), 141ff.; also Matthews (1989), 256–62.

72 Agapetus again preaches care for the 'poor' (*penetes*); cf. ch. 16. Here he also talks of the 'love of the destitute' (*ptokhoi*). Assuming this is more than stylistic variation, it draws attention to the distinction, certainly in late antiquity, between the latter (e.g. beggars, cripples, the homeless), estimated by John Chrysostom as around 10% of the population of Antioch in the mid-C4 (*Hom. 66 on Matt. 3*), and a much larger category of the poor (*penetes*), possibly even the majority of the population, whom the vicissitudes of ancient life (e.g. wars, banditry, disease, famine, poor harvests, taxation, floods, earthquakes) could ruin. Given the large number of *penetes*, it is clear why their cultivation by the emperor was politically important.

It was more radical, and perhaps accordingly reserved to this later chapter of his work, for Agapetus to exhort the emperor to care for the lowest of the low, and to express this patronage in terms of being the emperor of the destitute, through the analogy of the purple (i.e. imperial) robe of love for the destitute. Justinian apparently agreed: witness his foundation of hospitals and hostels for the destitute recorded in the *Bldgs.*, or their celebration in the altar-cloth in Hagia Sophia (Paul, *Description* 755ff.). Brown (1992; 2002) highlights the distinction between *penetes* and *ptokhoi*. For the representation of even notables as *ptokhoi*, that is, the lowest of the low, in comparison to the emperor, see Brown (1992), 154.

73 Seeing all men as if they were God implies reverence for even the humblest, and takes

62. Every man who longs for salvation must run to help from above, but the emperor above all – for he has care for all. Guarded by God, he both nobly defeats his enemies and zealously gives his own people security.⁷⁴

63. God needs nothing, the emperor only God. Imitate, therefore, Him who needs nothing, and be generous to those who seek mercy without keeping an exact account of your servants, but provide everyone with what they ask for to live. For it is much better, on account of the worthy, to show mercy also to the unworthy, than to deprive the worthy on account of the unworthy.

64. When asking for forgiveness of sins,⁷⁵ forgive also yourself those who offend you. For forgiveness is given in return for forgiveness, and for reconciliation with our fellow slaves, [friendship and familiarity with God].

65. He who strives to rule blamelessly must guard against both ill repute from those outside and from shaming himself before them, in order that he may abstain on their account from openly offending and prevent himself from sinning in private.⁷⁶ For if his subjects appear worthy of respect, the emperor must be much more worthy of it.

further the radicalism of the last chapter and of ch. 16. This was reflected in such good works of Justinian and Theodora as hospitals and homes for prostitutes: *Bldgs.* 1.9. The radical idea is well caught in the story told by the Miaphysite, John of Ephesus (*Lives of the Eastern Saints* 12.179, in Brown [2003], 188), of how two ‘saintly’ and ascetic ladies in Amida (mod. Diyarbakır) in the 540s urged the rich to care for the poor: ‘When God is knocked down in the street and swarms with lice and faints from hunger, do you not fear Him?’ Both Agapetus’ advice here, and e.g. Leontius’ *Life of St John the Almsgiver* (early C7), suggest that such ‘philanthropic radicalism’ was not the preserve of any one Christian tendency.

74 A further reference to military triumphs under God – a standard feature of imperial propaganda, and panegyric: cf. chs. 20, 58 and *Prefaces to the Corpus*; Paul, *Description* (e.g. 10ff.); Menander Rhetor, *Epideictic Speeches* 2.372ff.

75 The Greek is slightly ambiguous. My translation follows that of Banduri (in his Latin version in *PG*). It has the merit of making the chapter reflect the (Christian) so-called ‘Lord’s Prayer’: ‘Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us ...’ Note how, as elsewhere (e.g. ch. 5.), the politick Agapetus explains why it is in the emperor’s own interest to do the right thing. For the ‘slave’ analogy, see ch. 68. Riedinger omits the bracketed phrase.

76 ‘Those outside’ (*tous exō*) is obscure, but could refer e.g. either to those outside the imperial circle, or even the governing classes, as well as to ‘outsiders’ more generally, but whose judgement of Justinian’s behaviour nevertheless matters. The sense is that in order to rule blamelessly, the emperor must do nothing in public *or* private that will damage his reputation. See *PGL*, which cites *tous exō* with a meaning, attributed to the theologian Origen, of ‘those belonging to the outer circle of believers’. It also has such other meanings as ‘heretics’, but which seem improbable here.

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66. For a private individual, I say, wickedness is to do mean things worthy of punishment; for a ruler it is *not* to do what is good and assists salvation. Abstaining from evil does not justify a ruler,⁷⁷ but the provision of good crowns him. Let him, therefore, not only consider abstaining from wickedness, but strive also to hold fast to justice.⁷⁸

67. Death is not abashed by the splendours of rank: he sinks his all-devouring fangs into everyone. Before his inexorable arrival, therefore, let us transfer our abundance of treasure to heaven. For no one takes away there, once he has departed, what he collects in the world: but having left behind everything on earth, he is called naked to account for his life.⁷⁹

68. The emperor is the master of everyone, but together with everyone he is the slave of God. He will then be most properly called master, when he masters himself and is not a slave to unseemly pleasures but, with pious reflexion – the invincible lord of irrational passions – as his ally, he prevails against the all-powerful lusts of the body with the armament of temperance.⁸⁰

77 'Justify' (*dikaioi*) here, not in the sense of 'making just' but in the biblical sense of 'vindicate' or 'pronounce as righteous': Exod. 23.7, Jer. 3.11 in the Septuagint; Luke 16.13. Cf. the theological expression, 'justification by faith'.

78 For justice as *the* imperial virtue – and of those in authority more generally – see n. 5 above. This chapter begins the sombre coda to the work, emphasising the archetypal Christian themes of death and judgement – even for emperors – although the consequences of an adverse verdict are tactfully not spelt out. More particularly, it contains repeated reminders that, for all his exalted position, he is only a man after all – most strikingly in ch. 71.

79 Cf. ch. 38 and Matt. 6.19: 'Do not store up treasures on earth ...' The description of a soul being audited or called to account (*logotheitai*) after death is typical of the Roman, bureaucratic envisioning of judgement and the way heaven and hell were commonly imagined in late antiquity. See n. 81 below.

80 Notwithstanding the references to God and piety, the sentiment here is Stoic: it is through reason and reflexion, not faith or grace, and the classical, pre-Christian, though now christianised virtue of temperance (cf. ch. 18, n. 32) that the emperor is to master his passions. Cf. the Stoic emperor Marcus Aurelius (r. 161–80), *Meditations*, *passim*. This chapter echoes Col. 1.7 and 4.7, where Paul uses the term *sundouloi* ('fellow slaves') to describe his relationship and that of his colleagues with God. Here it is used not only to capture that relationship but also that of the individual in relation to his passions. There is no merit in softening the translation to 'servant'. Slavery remained an important institution in the late antique world, as of earlier periods (Rotman, 2004), accepted in principle by almost all, including Christian, intellectuals from Paul onwards: see Garnsey (1996), 173ff.; de Ste. Croix (2006), 349–55. The fundamental legal distinction amongst individuals remained, according to Justinian's *Institutes* 1.3, between slaves and freemen, notwithstanding a wide range of other legally recognised status categories. For 'slavery' as an uncontroversial description of the relationship between man and God, see

69. As shadows accompany bodies, so sins will follow souls, providing a clear picture of our deeds. There is, therefore, no possibility of denial at judgement: our actions themselves will testify against us – not through giving voice but by showing what has been done by us.⁸¹

70. The transitory state of our present life resembles the passage of a sea-faring ship which escapes the notice of us, its sailors. Little by little it sweeps off course, and escorts us each to our end.⁸² If this is how things are, therefore, let us run past the changing affairs of the world, and hasten to those that remain to the ages of ages.⁸³

71. Let not the pompous and supercilious man raise himself up like a long-horned bull, but let him reflect on the nature of the flesh and check the swelling of his heart. For if he has become a ruler on earth, let him not forget his beginning from the earth, ascending from dust to the throne, and after a period of time descending there.

72. Strive forever, unconquerable emperor. And, as those who have begun to climb a ladder do not cease their upward progress until they have reached the highest rung, so you also hold firm to the ascent in goodness that you may enjoy the kingdom above. May Christ, the King of those who rule and are ruled, grant this to you and your consort, for ever and ever. Amen.⁸⁴

also, for example, Procopius' description of the relics of martyrs used to cure Justinian as the bodies of men 'enslaved to God' (*Bldgs* 1.7.14).

81 This idea of legal process, and of rendering account by the dead, both here and in ch. 67, can be taken literally. Kelly (2004), *Epilogue*, provides numerous parallels, in Christian sources, between earthly and heavenly bureaucratic and judicial procedures, including one in which God, 'the just judge', rebukes the prosecuting angel for time-wasting (*Visio Pauli*, 17, c.420, in Kelly [2004]). See also Bell (forthcoming).

82 The metaphors are nautical. *Parapempo*, here translated 'escort', also has nautical meanings. However, perhaps significantly here, it can also specifically mean 'escort to the grave'.

83 'To the ages of ages': that is, eternally. This un-classical idiom entered Christian usage through the NT (e.g. Matt. 18.24; Phil. 4.20 etc.) from a Jewish translation into Greek of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint.

84 Strikingly, Christ appears here, by name, for the first and only time – mainly it would seem for rhetorical effect. See Introduction, p. 39. Agapetus otherwise always speaks of *God* (who, for Christians, constitutes a Trinity, comprising Father, Son and Holy Spirit). The church of Hagia Sophia, rebuilt 532–37 – the ideological symbol *par excellence* of the Justinianic empire – is similarly described by Procopius (*Bldgs*. 1.61) as a church of *God*, with no reference to any saint, Christ, the Holy Spirit, or to the *Theotokos*, God's mother (= Mary). Earlier

(*Bldgs.* 1.2), Procopius refers to ‘Sophia’, literally ‘wisdom’, in the church’s name as ‘an epithet which they have most appropriately invented for *God*, by which they call His temple’ (my italics). We have in Agapetus a literary parallel to this cosmic, architectural vision which similarly emphasises the key relationship between the emperor and God, whose representative on earth he is.

This approach does not imply that the emperor has a special relationship with only one member of the Trinity, namely the Father. It rather reflects, first, that as God’s vicegerent on earth, he stands in a Christlike relationship to Him. It may also, however, have the virtue of avoiding any hint of the Christological conflicts that bedevilled Christendom, both then and earlier: see Bell (forthcoming), also ch. 21 above and Brown (1997), 152–58.

There was no objective reason to mention Theodora – except, one suspects, that any serious address to the emperor that did not suitably acknowledge the woman whom Paul had effectively portrayed as God’s close adviser (Paul, *Description* 60) would be doomed to failure. It is a tribute to her standing that, God and the emperor apart, she is the only other individual, whether on earth or in Heaven, who is named. This last chapter, in emphasising the partnership of Justinian and his wife, is making the same point as the visual imagery in the sanctuary of the church of San Vitale, Ravenna (dedicated in 548). Here Christ, seated on a globe, presides over the world in which the emperor and empress, below, lead man- and womankind in homage and piety. Similarly Justinian and his empress both beseech God for mercy to Constantinople and its people in Romanos, *Kontakion* 54, str. 18 (*On Earthquakes and Fires*).

ANONYMOUS *DIALOGUE ON POLITICAL SCIENCE*

BOOK IV – MILITARY MATTERS

Dramatis Personae:¹

Menas ('Menadorus') – a Patrician and former Praetorian and Urban Prefect
Thomas ('Thomasius') – a *referendarius*, a senior government official

<Menas>² (4.1)³ <In order to>⁴ give orders, you should envelop yourself in the battle.⁵ You must place yourself now before the front ranks; now, on the wings; now, at the tail of the columns; and now amongst the rearguard.⁶ (4.2) You should give orders in person to both junior and senior officers, and make your speeches both concise and military in style, so far as audibility and the circumstances permit.⁷ (4.3) It is vitally important that each man

1 These identifications reflect Photius, *Bibliotheca*, codex 37: see Introduction, pp. 10–12.

2 In Bks 4 and 5, the names of speakers are my insertions to make the dialogue easier to follow. < > signify my addition or Mazzucchi's, here and elsewhere, to the same end.

3 The numbering here and throughout follows Mazzucchi (2002).

4 The MS begins in mid-sentence. 'In order to' is Mazzucchi's reconstruction. The Introduction, pp. 50–52, explains why military science is an essential element of 'political' science, to be dealt with in works on the latter.

5 *Peritithesthai* normally means 'put on, put round oneself'. But it can be used metaphorically, as in 'put on the royal power'. This metaphor exemplifies the vivid style favoured both here and by Agapetus. The sense is, however, clear: a commander must, as it were, be everywhere. See also n. 8 below.

6 Both of the Greek words used (*ouragia* and *opisthophylax*) normally signify 'rearguard' of some kind. A derivative of the former, *ouragos*, denotes a 'tail-ender' of a unit of infantry or cavalry, and furnishes the basis of my translation. The distinction our author probably intends is between *ouragia*, as the rearmost rank of a formation or battle line, and *opisthophylakes*, troops/units stationed further back and detailed to prevent attacks against the rear. The last man in every file, i.e. collectively the final rank of a formation, were the *ouragoi* (pl.) or 'file-closers', whose important role in maintaining cohesion from the rear during combat is frequently acknowledged: see e.g. *Strategicon* 12.B.16.27–29, 17.40–44. (This guide to generalship is often attributed to the future emperor Maurice (r. 582–602); see Rance's edition [forthcoming]). References to the *Strategicon* follow the style adopted in Dennis (1984).

7 Hansen (1993) argued that surviving battle speeches were spurious on the grounds that

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is addressed by name.⁸ For Cyrus the Persian,⁹ this provided a successful spell¹⁰ of the greatest value in his campaigns: (4.4) it showed him, on the one hand, to be an acute spectator and scrutineer not only of the outcome of the battle, but also of the bravery and cowardice of every man. As his

they could never have been delivered. Remarks such as the present passage, and the work of the military writer, Syrianus Magister, suggest such scepticism is exaggerated. Perhaps the answer lies in the *Strategicon*, which envisages (7.A.4) a commander's addressing all the troops, but 'not all at once in one place' nor probably at the length, or with the rhetorical flourishes found in some histories.

For whatever reason, there is no mention here or elsewhere of the kind of religious preparations for battle of the type carried out by Philippicus when fighting the Persians (Theophylact Simocatta, *Histories* 2.2.5), or the blessing of flags before battle enjoined in the *Strategicon* 7.1. See also *Pref.*, and 8.21. On Syrianus, whose military compendium includes the work which Dennis (1985) edited separately as *On Strategy*, see Rance (2007), 346–47, also Zuckerman (1990).

8 Not to be taken too literally. Soldiers could at least sometimes, however, hope to be noticed and rewarded accordingly: for instance, at Bezabde, on the River Tigris in 360, soldiers 'fighting under the emperor's eye', left off their helmets in the hope of being recognised by the emperor. Many died from Persian archery as a result: *Amm. Marc.* 20.12. See Introduction, p. 53. But what is indisputable is the importance of the commander's properly motivating his men, and of increasingly acting, from the C4 BCE onwards as a kind of 'battle manager'. He would normally keep out of danger himself, but move rapidly behind the front lines, usually mounted, observing developments, issuing orders, and, above all, sustaining morale, praising good soldiers, and berating the bad: see, in general, *Strategicon* 1.16, and 7.B.1. The practice is also recommended in e.g. the C2 BCE military and technical writer, Philo of Byzantium (5.4.68–69). It is exemplified by Julius Caesar in a crisis during his conquest of Gaul (58–50 BCE; *Gallia War* 2.25) in language anticipating that of the *Dialogue*, whose author may even have read this text. Caesar's work was available in Constantinople at this period, and cited by John the Lydian (*On Magistracies* 3.32).

This style of command persisted into the imperial system: for a contemporary example, see Belisarius overseeing, at personal hazard, an assault on Auximus (mod. Osimo) in 539 (*Wars* 6.27.12). For these and related issues, see Jones (1964), ch. 17; Treadgold (1995), ch. 2; Michael Whitby (2000b), ch. 11. Most recently Sidebottom (2004), and essays in the *GRW* (2007), vol. 2; also Lendon (2006).

9 Cyrus the Great, founder of the Persian Empire (r. c.557–530 BCE), secured a favourable reputation in both Jewish and Greek sources, including Procopius (*Wars* 2.2.15) where Alexander the Great is also cited; and in *Bldgs.* 1.12–16. Xenophon, *The Education of Cyrus* (*Cyropaedia*), for the classic (largely fictionalised) C4 BCE account of his military and political achievements. For a later, also favourable, Persian parallel, see 4.63ff. below. *On Strategy* (see n. 7) also mentions Cyrus with approval, and expands on Xenophon, 7.5.9–20. Cyrus probably features here because he was a standard *exemplum*, like Alexander, to be used in praises of rulers or discussions of kingship: see Menander Rhetor, 2.371.5. For other comparisons of Roman emperors with Cyrus, see e.g. Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 1.7, with Cameron and Hall's note *ad loc.*

10 'Spell' (*philtron*), technically, a (love) potion. Another vivid metaphor.

means of persuasion, he directed at each man personally a firm and clear glance from his eyes. And, on the other hand, he gave them simultaneously greater expectations <of rewards> in the face of present dangers, which also made those about to fight more enthusiastic.¹¹ (4.5) Homer was of the same opinion, when he said:

‘Be men, my friends. Remember your warlike prowess.’¹²

(4.6) It would turn out well, I think, if deployment for battle was to be organised in this way.¹³ (4.7) Let the preparations begin with the first light of dawn and end at sunrise. In the meantime, let the army remain quiet, equipped with their weapons, standing completely motionless at their posts, and bristling with weapons¹⁴ – their gaze fixed on the standard that customarily leads the army, with their ears tuned to the officers giving orders. (4.8) It is recognised that this rule, if followed, has always led to the successful execution of battle plans, whilst its transgression has caused the greatest damage.¹⁵ It would be one of the essential requirements that officers giving

11 For this emphasis on observing *both* good *and* bad, see Plato, *Rep.* 9.576e–577a.

12 *Il.* 6.112 (and elsewhere). Homer is also cited for military advice in *On Strategy* 3.23–44 – further evidence of his continuing hold on the Greco-Roman imagination. (He features too in *Strategicon* 8.B.83 (= *Il.* 11.802–03; 16.44–45), although *Strategicon* 8 merely comprises two existing collections of gnomic material incorporated into the treatise with minimal revision.) From the emergence of *Tactica* (= military handbooks) as a genre, Homer was cited as the primary authority on tactical wisdom! The C1/2 military writer Aelian, *Tactica* 1.2, places Homer at the head of the tradition and refers to three (now lost) works ‘concerning tactics in Homer’ by Stratocles, Hermias and Frontinus. Similarly, Polyaeus assembled Homeric quotations in the preface to his *Strategemata* (pr. 4–13). There are five references by name, including quotations, from Homer in what survives of the *Dialogue*. This is more than for any other writer, although the echoes of Plato are more numerous (c. 60+), followed by Cicero (12, including 3 references by name: see n. 46 below and Introduction, p. 50). These references come chiefly from their respective *Republics*. For a list of the *Dialogue*’s sources, see Mazzucchi (2002), 159–61.

13 I have translated *polemou taxis*, with some hesitation, as ‘deployment for battle’, although the ‘management of battle’ in the field is a possible alternative. *Taxis* has a wide range of meanings clustering around the concept of bringing order/arranging. It could also mean here ‘orders’ or ‘instructions’ (for war or battle), a less common usage found in Plato (e.g. *Laws* 925b; *The Statesman* 305c).

14 *Rhigein* normally means to shiver or tremble, which sits ill with the emphasis on the army’s need to remain quiet and motionless. The poetic usage preferred here, however, ‘to bristle [*sc.* with arms]’ seems more appropriate to an army on the brink of battle: see *LSJ* under *rhigeo*.

15 For the confusion caused by a shout misinterpreted as a command, see Theophylact Simocatta, *Histories* 2.15.7–10. More significant, however, is the *Strategicon*’s emphasis on the importance of silence and concentration before engaging in combat, including restrictions

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orders be skilful in warfare and expertly trained in the art of communication.¹⁶ (4.9) Indeed, it is also said that Scythian commanders give orders on the battlefield with trumpets that others can scarcely do with their tongues!¹⁷ However, let us only enjoy now what the majority is capable of learning – precepts which, if followed, would be beneficial in war, (4.10) but if ignored, would be injurious: namely, signalling with the trumpet halts and rest periods, reveille and night watch changes, when to arm and put on armour, when to march more quickly and when more slowly, the shape of the formations – including, especially, the disposition of the columns – where, in Homer's words:

‘Let shield buttress shield, helmet helmet, soldier soldier’.¹⁸

(4.11) Next, attacks against the enemy, engagement and disengagement, wheeling and maintaining straight ranks, withdrawal and recovery, rest and rally, pursuit and halt, and the seizing of strongholds.

Thomas: (4.12) Both, Menas, are really essential in warfare: signalling with the trumpet what is to be done, and the swiftest obedience of the army. How else would a general be equal to all the commands of battle, especially at a moment of crisis?¹⁹

on the number of bugles and strict prohibitions on troops so much as whispering in the ranks: see esp. 2.17–18; 3.5.2–8; 12. B.11.24–27; 14.4–5; 17.39–44. The observance of silence up until the point of combat is documented during the Principate (e.g. Arrian, *Tactica* 25; Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 62.12.1). This facilitated instructions and unnerved the enemy: see Goldsworthy (1998), 196–97, but Cowan (2007) for an alternative view.

16 See *Strategicon* (e.g. 1.4.3) for the importance attached to selecting experienced officers and the specification of clear and unambiguous orders.

17 By the later Roman empire, ‘Scythian’, used originally of the historic Scythians settled north of the Black Sea, and described in Herodotus (C5 BCE) and elsewhere, had become a classicising way of referring to later nomadic tribes stretching from north of the Danube and the Black Sea to Central Asia: e.g. Huns, Alans, Avars, Turks etc. See further *OCD* under ‘Scythia’. This reference to Scythian commanders (or signallers?) appears to denote the enemy, rather than e.g. Hunnic commanders in the Roman army, since they are said to do something apparently better than the Romans. The substantive point seems to be that ‘Scythian’ commanders can, using bugles, issue orders that would be remarkably complex, even if issued verbally.

18 *Il.* 13.131, 16.215.

19 For a similar, almost certainly not coincidental list of military tasks, Plato, *Rep.* 7.526d. For signalling with the trumpet: *Wars* 3.13.4 (lights also used), 14.15; 4.20.18; 5.20.18; 6.23.23–29; 7.36.8. See also references to the regimental *boukinator* and *toubator* (players of different kinds of military trumpets). These, together with references to the instruments themselves (*boukina* / *touba* [= (Lat.) *bucina* / *tuba*]) throughout the *Strategicon*, suggest long-term continuity in the system of military signalling. However, Procopius complains in his *Wars* (6.23.23–29) that the ancient signals of the Roman army had by now fallen into disuse, so

Menas: (4.13) Absolutely. But let us add, if you agree, this further precept for drill in battle ...

Thomas: ... Which is?

Menas: (4.14) In training, contenders in war should always, without exception, carry all their weapons, as in real war. But instead of spears, they should bear in their war games long, green staves whose tips have been dipped in ruddle and strike each other with them.²⁰ This will reveal who is good or bad in training: the former will bear the marks of blows on their shields, but the bad on their body or back.

Thomas: It would not be unreasonable to prescribe this, Menas.

Menas: (4.15) That is how the infantry, Thomas, should be deployed. As for the cavalry, let their commander deploy them similarly, sometimes on their own, sometimes on each wing of both phalanxes, positioning them so that the forces on each side are both sufficient and evenly balanced.²¹ Further, and in addition to the rearguards and baggage guards, a company of

that he recommends a 'second best' procedure to Belisarius. There is, however, no necessary conflict between the *Dialogue* and Procopius if we assume that, at the time of the *Dialogue*, two types of trumpet, with different sounds, were used, as Procopius urged (since contemporary trumpeters were apparently unable to give two different commands on one trumpet) to order attack and retreat respectively.

20 Ruddle (*milton*) was used to dye the sails of the three ships of Belisarius and his staff: *Wars* 3.13.3. But it is just possibly an allusion to the C5 BCE Athenian practice of herding latecomers or truants to the popular Assembly (*ekklesia*) with a vermilioned rope. Those smeared with red were liable to a fine; see Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 22, *Ekklesiastousae* 378–79. There seems no other evidence for Menas' particular 'training weapon'. Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 2.3.17–20, describes a mock battle, however; likewise Onasander, *Strategikos* 10.4, on whom see Introduction, p. 5. Although evidence for the particular practice recommended here is missing, the use of wooden swords and bladeless spears and arrows was a long-standing practice in the Roman army: for the C6, see especially *Strategicon* 12.B.2, where Maurice probably refers to the wooden swords or staves traditionally employed in the training regime of Roman recruits, both in single combat and in large-scale mock battles. For this ancient practice cf. Polybius, 10.20.3–4; Livy, 26.51, 40.6, 9; Onasander, *Strategikos* 10.4; Veg., *Epitome* 1.11–12. For further details, see Rance (2000), Carter (2006) and n. 25 below.

21 *Phalanx* – at its simplest, a square or rectangular formation of (normally) heavy infantry of unspecified size which one associates with the heavy infantry, or 'hoplites', of classical Greece. The term, which goes back to Homer, is a standard term of art in early Byzantine military manuals (e.g. the *Strategicon*; Syrianus, *On Strategy*). In reality, however, when the *Strategicon* does use 'phalanx', it usually means no more than a generic 'line' or 'formation', including elongated marching columns (e.g. 7.B.11.48). For C6 historians too, 'phalanx' rarely has the traditional restricted, 'hoplite' meaning. Thus Procopius often uses the word, but never means a specific tactical formation – rather 'battle line', 'array', 'body': for examples, see Rance (2005).

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500 cavalry on both sides should be tasked with searching out the ambushes and traps of the enemy within a radius of one mile.²²

Thomas: And this too should necessarily happen.

Menas: (4.16) So, when everyone has been equipped and prepared in this way, then, as the sun begins to decline, let the trumpets sound the mock battle.²³ As the two phalanxes engage, let the officers give orders for the manoeuvres we have described. (4.17) The general should, as we have said,²⁴ move rapidly up and down each sector of the battlefield making flying visits to everyone, and both encourage and oversee each one. Instead of himself fighting with his hands, he should pay close attention to, and reflect on what is happening. (4.18) After the battle – even though it is not for real – has been raging without a break for some three or four hours, let the signal for rest be sounded.²⁵ Next day at sunrise, the commanding officer should gather all the officers and men of the army together and hold a critical review of the exercise – representing it to everyone as more exacting and serious than it actually is. (4.19) He should separate out those who, on the one hand, held their position in the battle line, were firm in not losing their nerve, and obeyed orders, as well as those who distinguished themselves in the battle. He should separate from these, those who, on the other hand, behaved in

22 Following Mazzucchi (2002), 70, I have translated the Greek measure ‘stade’ as ‘mile’ on the grounds that the longer measure makes better tactical sense, even if it is not what the text – as restored by Mazzucchi – states. A stade equals no more than 600 Greek feet, just over 606 English feet; a (Roman) mile = 8 stades, some 4,850 English feet, or 1,478 metres. Support for this comes from the *Strategicon* (7.B.8, B.12.17ff., 9.3.132ff.), which Mazzucchi cites without commentary. The first of these passages says, for example, that two *banda* (sing. *bandon*: a unit of around 300 troops) ‘should always be kept a mile or two in front of the main body ... to prevent the enemy from observing our formation and modifying theirs accordingly’. The longer distance would also allow the main body of troops greater time to ready themselves against an attack. For the tactical importance of training on ambushes, *Strategicon* 4.

23 I.e. in the afternoon, thereby avoiding, in training, the mid-day heat.

24 4.1–6 above.

25 Large-scale mock battles and simulated ‘manoeuvres’ are intermittently documented as an element of Roman military training dating back to the Republic: see Rance (2000). They were designed to train units to co-operate in the battle line, tested officers’ skills of command, and offered a psychological taste of combat which minimised the shocks and imponderables of actual battle. The best-reported examples are the two mock battles staged by Heraclius before his first campaign against the Persians in 622: see George of Pisidia’s *Expeditio Persica* (*Persian Expedition*), an iambic poem in three cantos, on which Theophanes’ account (*AM* 6113, 6114) heavily depends. (Unfortunately Theophanes got the year wrong: see Mango and Scott’s notes on *AM* 6113ff.) Cf. also Agathias, *Histories* 2.1.2, for Narses’ military training regime, with similar goals of restoring tactical cohesion, in the last stages of the reconquest of Italy.

the opposite way – either completely or to a degree. Let him pronounce judgement on them with the assent of the other officers – though not all of them: only of the commanders of the phalanx and the chiliarchs.²⁶ The good he should deem worthy of crowns, (4.20) praises, honours and public gifts. Of those found out to be cowards, some he will shame by flogging, others by having their hair shaved off, on others he will impose a shameful life by cashiering them. All this is in exercises. In real war, however, (4.21) he will punish some with amputation of their limbs, others he will simply put to death. And, to speak simply, he will repay everyone fittingly for their bravery or their cowardice.²⁷ He will first judge whether the officers (4.22) deserve honour or infamy. As we have said,²⁸ it would be most advantageous for this examination to take place in public and be given more than its rightful importance. Each individual officer or soldier should be asked if he either knows himself or has heard from someone else about what was said in the battle. And whoever comes forward voluntarily, let him be admitted to give evidence about both what he happens to know personally and what he has heard from others. (4.23) And let the officers make known what is discovered about those who have behaved well or badly in battle in their respective nations and households, in their countries and cities: in the case of the brave, with a view to their honour and reward; in that of the cowardly, for reproach. If this is done and the practice kept up, it would (4.24) educate the soldiers more than anything else in martial virtue. It would simultaneously instil in them both fear and desire: of an inclination to cowardice on the one hand, and an appetite for courage on the other. (4.25) There is, my dear friend, one and only one cause of both military and indeed wider civic well-being: honour conferred on the good and dishonour on the bad – just as the opposite is the cause of things going wrong. Whoever wishes to grasp the truth and be a statesman must hold to this principle unshakeably.²⁹

26 *Chiliarch* = a generic commander of a thousand men, roughly brigadier. A standard military term.

27 *Strategicon* 1.6–8, provides a long list of military crimes and their punishments, including death, with which commanders must familiarise their troops. Although these post-date the *Dialogue*, they doubtless carry some of the flavour of earlier practices. See Theophylact, 2.6.10–11, for the distribution of awards after victory.

28 4.18 above

29 It is hard to imagine such public ‘wash-ups’ improving morale, as opposed to ventilating and promoting grievances, or generating the civic and military well-being Menas seeks. Notwithstanding the duty of the good commander to berate and punish cowards etc. (see n. 8 above), comparison of this text with the greater detail in such specialist military manuals as the *Strategicon* suggests our author is militarily inexperienced – and perhaps as much concerned with politics and the cultivation of virtue generally as with military matters in themselves. This

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Thomas: (4.26) This is clear to everyone, Menas. However, one thing does remain unclear to me. As regards infantry, you have spoken well and fully. Yet of the cavalry – which I think should be treated first and at greater length, since it is the more highly regarded arm – you have spoken casually, as if it were thought subordinate to the infantry. Why?

Menas: (4.27) Your criticism, Thomas, does not seem to me to be wholly out of place, at least not completely, rather partly ‘yes’ and in part ‘no’. I would say now that the infantry should have the first place in battle – and reasonably so. But how can you say that the cavalry has been mentioned casually when, in our discussion, we have prescribed the same rules for it as for the infantry?³⁰ Would it not seem excessive to say the same things about it as we have said about the latter?

Thomas: (4.28) That might perhaps be so, Menas, and hardly to be encouraged. But in what way do you rank the cavalry as secondary to the infantry? Don’t you remember having learnt so often how, amongst the Romans, the rank of ‘cavalryman’ came immediately below that of the ‘optimates’, whom they also called ‘fathers’?³¹

becomes clearer when one compares this passage with Polybius, *Histories* 6.37–39, describing exemplary C3/2 BCE Roman military practice: outstanding bravery is rewarded by the general after the battle; but there is no ‘negative’ reporting such as that urged here. Polybius does, however, make clear that discipline, especially in respect of cowardice and desertion, was brutally – and publicly – enforced, while Alexander the Great also tolerated public denigration of defeated commanders.

Both authors stress the impact of punishment on a coward’s family and community, though this seems more realistic in the case of the citizen armies of early Rome than for mercenary troops. However, even in the C6 when armies were more ethnically diverse and recruited from distant regions, so long as recruits came from somewhere within the empire or were personal retainers (*bucellarii*) of a general, the point remains relevant. Even beyond the frontier, disgrace in Roman service may have damaged reputations – and certainly reduced the gold they eventually took home, if they survived.

30 4.15 above.

31 This appeal to ancient Roman precedent, and the attribution in parallel of contemporary institutions (e.g. Roman law, the Praetorian Prefecture, or Circus factions) to such semi-mythical figures as Romulus is something our author shares with the Justinianic *Corpus of Civil Law* (e.g. *Institutes* 1.2) and later Justinianic legislation (e.g. *Just. Nov.* 23, 24, on which see Maas [1986]) and Mal., *Chronicle* e.g. 33, 171–72. Note also the attribution of later Roman institutions, such as the Praetorian Prefecture, to remote Roman antiquity found throughout John the Lydian’s *On Magistracies*. It underscores how far this predominantly Greek-speaking society regarded itself as *Roman*, not Greek – the latter, by this period, a synonym for ‘Pagan’. John the Lydian (*On Magistracies* e.g. 3.42) even deplored the shift from Latin as the language of administration. But one cannot escape the feeling, not least given the profound social bias in the rest of the *Dialogue* in favour of the Constantinopolitan upper senatorial classes (translated

Menas: (4.29) If, Thomas, our inquiry were about questions of rank, then your argument would be reasonable. But if in practising war, we were to dispute about rank, we should be in the same position as someone who theorised about strength and skill as if they were eyes and hair!

Thomas: (4.30) But why, Menas, must we therefore accept as incontrovertible that the infantry is more essential in war than the cavalry?

Menas: If the argument held,³² Thomas, then it would indeed be incontrovertible. If not, it would neither be so incontrovertibly nor in any other way. But let's find out whether we can come to an agreed view about it.

Thomas: Yes, of course, we must find out.

Menas: (4.31) Every individual thing, Thomas, contains in itself the cause of its own being or well-being. And, by its own proper cause, either one or, as I at any rate think, both will either perish or be preserved together.

Thomas: What do you mean?

Menas: (4.32) Well, my friend, we say that life is the cause of being, but virtue is the cause of well-being. In the presence of virtue, therefore, the well-being of the soul will be maintained along with it; in its absence, it will depart. Similarly the presence or absence of life is the same as a man's being or not being.

Thomas: Absolutely true.

Menas: (4.33) Similarly, if a state possesses the cause of its own generation and well-being, is it not likely that it would survive and prosper, so long as it held on to this? Otherwise, would it either not remain or remain in a bad way?

Thomas: All this is also true.

Menas: (4.34) And by reason of what cause, Thomas, did the state of the Romans achieve such greatness?

Thomas: Obviously, I think, through war, Menas. In the beginning, it did not exist. But from the smallest of cities, it became very great. It is recognised that it achieved power by this means.³³

'optimates' here), that Thomas' enthusiasm for cavalry may also reflect a military preference in certain upper-class Constantinopolitan circles (cf. n. 37 below). Menas' specific point, which supports rather than undermines the existence of a 'class' dimension to this ostensibly military debate, is that the second highest social status group in the Roman republic (and well into the C4 empire) were the so-called 'knights' (*equites*/cavalrymen), who ranked in status directly below senators. See Introduction, pp. 23–24.

³² A loose translation of 'if the argument/reasoning wished'.

³³ Theophylact Simocatta, *Histories* 2.14.6, similarly attributes Rome's rise to greatness to its military ethos, as does Sallust, *War with Catiline*, although we have no evidence that our author knew this work.

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Menas: (4.35) Yes, indeed. And through practising what method of warfare in particular did it achieve that power? Was it not through the infantry?³⁴

Thomas: Chiefly through the infantry, Menas – but not without the assistance and most important support of the cavalry.

Menas: (4.36) But what is chiefly and especially important, Thomas, would not that take the first place in the order of battle and be the more essential?³⁵

Thomas: It must be so.

Menas: Well, my good fellow, was it right or not, therefore, that the infantry was drawn up in front of the cavalry in battle and was the more necessary?

Thomas: It seems it was.

Menas: (4.37) I think, Thomas, that you will remember hearing this too from history: that, in the Roman army, a thousand infantry were followed by sometimes a hundred, sometimes fewer cavalry – not to fight but to provide services for the war.³⁶

Thomas: (4.38) I do indeed remember. But, Menas, I wasn't thinking of Roman times in the past, when I said that the cavalry should be given first place, but rather of what is *now* the dominant practice in war!

Menas: (4.39) This, Thomas, this I would willingly claim: that the most effective form of warfare and that most likely to enhance the state has now, I don't know how, been disregarded (4.40) and diminished the state as well as itself.³⁷ We must accordingly now at least practise energetically what

34 For a similar, and similarly rhetorical, claim (in a battlefield plea to Belisarius to use infantry effectively), see *Wars* 5. 24ff.

35 Menas' appeal to ancient Roman precedent ignores changes in warfare, including the character of enemy forces, over several hundred years – as Thomas points (4.38) out. For the relevance of this argument to the dating of the *Dialogue*, see Introduction, pp. 23–24. If the *Dialogue* was written late in Justinian's reign, these comments are even more likely to have been intended as a contribution to a contemporary debate on the relative importance of the two arms.

36 This appears, as Mazzucchi notes, to refer to the C2 BCE Greek historian Polybius, whose theme was Rome's rise to great power, and who paid especial attention to Roman tactics. See, for example, his *Histories* 1.16. 2; 2.24.3; 6.20.9.

37 *Strategicon* 12.B.*Proem* laments 'recent neglect' of infantry tactics, before providing detailed guidance for their deployment to remedy this. However, Bk. 12 is a supplement to an originally eleven-book treatise; its proem largely rehearses the first, general proem of the *Strategicon*. Here the author, in similar language, laments a decline in military affairs in general. That Bks. 1–11 are explicitly conceived as 'a composition on cavalry' and that the author's primary concern, then at least, was to improve cavalry deployment and tactics, suggests that cavalry was the branch he then deemed most in need of reform. Perhaps this reflects the fact the *Strategicon* was first planned and written in the light of two decades of defeat by the (mounted) Avars in the

has, when put into effect, always shown the state more imposing and more terrifying to its enemies, and when ignored, much weaker.

Thomas: We should, it seems, venture to practise this.

Menas: (4.41) But it was not only the Roman republic that acquired greatness by doing this.³⁸ For the Persians, the Greeks and other barbarians achieved dominance over their enemies through using an infantry army. (4.42) As to the Persians, why must we talk about what we can see now with our own eyes?³⁹ As for the Greeks, the Spartans gained mastery

570s–580s. But later Maurice came to realise that infantry were vitally important too.

Vegetius ignores cavalry practice completely, but only because ‘present practice suffices’ (1.20, 3.26). Rance (2007), 348, suggests that the prominence given to cavalry in Procopius and elsewhere partly reflects the greater rhetorical opportunities offered to an historian by their spectacular operations, and that this may have misled later historians. He also argues that Procopius was especially interested in Homerising ‘monomachy’ (one to one combat), and that most of his informants appear to be cavalry officers: Rance (2005). Michael Whitby has, however, suggested to me that Belisarius did tend to make greater use of cavalry than infantry, in the West at least, perhaps because he did not appreciate how to use other arms of his army effectively, or because his expeditionary forces contained an unusually large cavalry element owing to large numbers of his retainers (*bucellarii*) and non-Roman recruits, both of whom tended to be mounted, in his expeditionary force.

38 A literary precedent for the emphasis on infantry may lie in Vegetius’ (Latin) *Epitome* (late C4/early C5), not cited specifically in the *Dialogue*, but praised by John the Lydian, *On Magistracies* 1.47, and, therefore, presumably known to others in Constantinople, possibly including our author. It is worth remembering that in the C6 Constantinople was a city in which Latin was widely understood, at least in elite circles, as Book 5 of the *Dialogue* demonstrates: see Averil Cameron (2009), and Introduction, p. 50. More specifically for knowledge of Vegetius in the East, see Rance’s forthcoming commentary etc. on the *Strategicon*.

Vegetius devotes a whole book (out of four) to infantry training and recruitment, as well as advocating (1.13) the use (or revival?) of the *armatura*, an advanced training exercise amounting, apparently, to a mock battle, analogous to the *Dialogue*’s war-gaming: cf. Amm. Marc. 14.11.3; 21.16.7. This last refers to *armatura pedestris*, that is, *infantry* training exercises. More generally, our author shares Vegetius’ apparent belief that many ancient practices have lapsed, to the cost of Roman military effectiveness, and should be revived: see also Veg., *Epitome* 3.10.

39 A reference to the Persian Wars from 527–32 and 540–56: see *Wars* 1–2; Agathias, *Histories*; Menander Protector, fr. 6.1; Greatrex (1998) and in Maas ed. (2005). Menas’ point is obscure: he implies that Persian infantry were central to their military success. Unfortunately, we know little about Sasanian armies, and that nearly always from a Roman standpoint. In fact, much modern scholarship inclines to seeing Sasanian strength as resting primarily on their heavy cavalry. *Strategicon* 11.1, on Persian tactics, also implies this: their infantry is not specifically mentioned, although Persian difficulty in dealing with *Roman* infantry is, while Menander Protector, fr. 23.1, mentions a Persian army of 20,000 horseman only (though he may just be mentioning the ‘important’ bit of the army). (Their archers, however, and increasingly their mounted archers, were certainly important, so that the *Strategicon*’s emphasis on Persian archery could well relate to mounted archers, which is not incompatible with *Wars*

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not only of the Athenians but of almost all the Greek cities, as well as of barbarians, by no other means than fighting the war on foot. The proof of this is that they were defeated several times in cavalry engagements, and always in sea-battles where the Athenians, on the other hand, excelled.⁴⁰ As for barbarians, (4.43) there is a law still in force today amongst the Gauls, who are a most powerful people, that no one should appear in the ranks of battle on horseback except the king, and he mounted on a white charger, so as to be more visible to the enemy – the opposite of what is customary elsewhere in wars. It is the proof of the greatest confidence and boldness. Such and so great (4.44) were their victories that almost all the peoples around them – and some a long distance away – many of whom were both very great and strong, fell to them.⁴¹ (4.45) I don't have time to tell of the successes both of

1.1, which appears to see Roman mounted archers as the summit of excellence. This could, however, reflect the Sasanians' preference for 'shower-shooting', which prioritised volume and continuity over greater Roman force or accuracy. See also n. 57 below.)

The conventional view of Persian infantry is that they were untrained and poorly armed, but numerous, cheap and expendable (one of the factors underlying successful Sasanian siege capabilities). This is compatible both with *Wars* 1.25 (a [tententious?] dismissal of their infantry by Belisarius, although he concedes they are frightening) and the passage from the *Strategicon* already noted. When deployed in battle (e.g. Dara), Sasanian infantry probably played a role similar to that of Roman infantry: a passive, stable tactical base or rallying point for the cavalry, operating in front or on the flanks, and employing highly fluid tactics prone to sudden reverses. It may well be, however, that our author was not well informed, and that his reference to contemporary Persians is no more than an acknowledgement of what is undoubtedly true: namely that they could levy and field a large host of infantry.

40 A broadly true generalisation: during the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE), for instance, the Athenians retreated within the 'Long Walls' of Athens rather than confront the Spartans in the field. For an example of Spartan infantry successes, see e.g. Plataea (479 BCE) where a Spartan-led Greek army finally ended King Xerxes of Persia's attempt to conquer Greece. For an Athenian naval success, see e.g. the defeat of the Persian fleet at Salamis (480 BCE), while their Aegean empire in the C5 BCE rested on their naval hegemony. But there were exceptions: the Boeotians defeated the Spartans at Leuctra (371 BCE), thereby ending two centuries of Spartan battlefield dominance (perhaps Menas had this battle in mind since cavalry played a major role on this occasion); it was a Spartan, Lysander, who destroyed the Athenian fleet at Aegospotami (in the Dardanelles) in 404 BCE, precipitating Athens' defeat in the Peloponnesian War.

41 'Gauls' is (another) classicising reference to the contemporary kingdom of the Merovingian Franks, of Germanic origin. Cf. Paul's similar archaising reference to the 'Celtic war cry' in his *Description* 228, below. They had settled in what is now north-east France, but their spectacular rise to dominate all of 'Francia', roughly modern France, following the defeat of the Visigoths in 507, and later to interfere in Italy, was a striking feature of the post-Roman C5–6 West. See *Wars* 5.12.41, 5.13.1–3, 5.13.11–13; 6.25.1–3; 8.20–28; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*; Pohl (2005); and Zuckerman (1993).

states and barbarians who conducted their wars with infantry. But let these be mentioned as an example, sufficient with experience itself, to show what is useful from this way of fighting.

(4.46) In addition, by investigating in terms of both nature and reason, we shall find how far infantry warfare is superior to cavalry. In terms of nature, an infantryman leads himself and is not lead by another; in terms of reason, he argues that, after fighting bravely and according to the law of war, he will secure lasting honour; but, if he should fall, he will obtain a death far better than a commonplace life. In my opinion, the Etruscan Firminus (4.47) well described the infantry army properly drawn up as: ‘a truly inviolate wall, a living wall, a moving wall, an intelligent wall, an iron wall, a wall not of a single city, as is usual, but of the whole state’.⁴² In short, neither (4.48) a lawful state nor a barbarian confederacy is known to have taken possession of, or lost territory or peoples – which are the major operations in war – or generally to have either achieved or suffered anything great without the power of infantry – except, that is, in exceptional circumstances.⁴³

(4.49) The cavalry will, however, have its own place and tasks in the battle without which the infantry would not easily survive. For example, reconnaissance and tracking the enemy, skirmishing, seizing in advance suitable places for encampment, preliminary securing of provisions and seeking out water and fodder, pursuit and follow-up of the enemy and wherever there happens to be need of cavalry assistance. Both arms combine (4.50) in a complete military organisation, provided, however, that the cavalry is up to

42 A good summary of the infantry role. The name ‘Firminus’, however, is otherwise unknown. Mai suspected it was a slip for Frontinus (*consul* 72/3, 98, and 100), whose military works were used by Vegetius (1.8, 2.3). He there cites Frontinus as a source, and the latter’s lost theoretical work is assumed to be the basis of much of the material in the *Epitome*, and known to, or at least cited in the C6 by, John the Lydian, *On Magistracies* 1.47. If so, the quotation may come from Frontinus’ lost *On Military Affairs*, not his *Stratagems* (*Strategemata*), which survive. Equally Firminus may be an otherwise unknown Etruscan author whose intelligent comment on the infantry has been picked up and transmitted to our author by some (unknown) third source.

This metaphor of infantry as a ‘wall’ has a long history: from at least Alcaeus, fr. 35a 10 (C7 BCE lyric poet from Lesbos) – though *Il.* 4.299 might be an even earlier example; Demosthenes 18.299, on whom see 5.42 with n. 49 below; and Aristides 26.82–84, a C2 sophist, whose varied and learned output made him a Byzantine school text: see Behr (1974), 147. The sentiment is also echoed by Maurice; he advocates, against cavalry charges, that the infantry should ‘lean their shoulders and put their weight against their shields so that they may easily resist the pressure’ (*Strategicon* 12.A.7.49–67).

43 Literally, ‘except, however, for things that are accustomed to happen by chance and not by reason’.

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its tasks. If not – and sometimes it does great damage – it itself readily both causes the horses to flee and destroys the morale of the infantry.⁴⁴

(4.51) To guard against this, we said earlier⁴⁵ that cavalymen should display nobility and a brave spirit, and should control themselves by a sense of shame, rather than their horses with their hands (4.52) and bridles. It would not be unreasonable if horsemen were physically spare and neither very large nor heavy, both on account of their armament and to preserve their horses' manoeuvrability and agility where needed.

Thomas: That is absolutely reasonable.

Menas: (4.53) What Cicero said about the Roman infantry, Thomas, is also worth remembering.⁴⁶ They always, he said, carried their arms with them; they were so inseparable that they regarded them as limbs of their body. They also carried five days rations as well even when there was no necessity to do so and pack animals were available.⁴⁷ Confirmed through long custom, this became a law amongst them, carrying a penalty if disregarded.

Thomas: (4.54) This, Menas, is something most appropriate for the endurance of military men.

Menas: Shall we not therefore, Thomas, also prescribe it for those who cultivate military science?

Thomas: It must be prescribed.⁴⁸

Menas: And shall we not also prescribe in addition to these, Thomas, what has always been recognised as a salvation of the army?

44 *Wars* 5.29.35–41 blames the indiscipline of the Roman cavalry for the defeat in the battle outside Rome in 537, while he praises the conspicuous bravery of some of the infantry. For other instances of disorderly or routed Roman cavalry, see e.g. Constantina in 502 (Ps. Joshua, *Chronicle* 51); Callinicum in 531 (*Wars* 1.18.37–48); Ad Decimum in 533 (*Wars* 3.19.15–24); the River Hippis in 552 (*Wars* 8.8.16–35). For C4 examples: Strasbourg in 357 (Amm. Marc. 16.12.37–42); Mesopotamia in 363 (Amm. Marc. 25.1.7–9); Adrianople in 378 (Amm. Marc. 31.13.2). Rance (2005).

45 In a lost part of the work.

46 Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 2.16 (which Mai suspected may repeat something in Cicero's *Republic* Bk 5, now lost). This is one of three unambiguous references to Cicero in the surviving parts of the *Dialogue* (the others being 5.64 and 5.209). Mazzucchi, however, identifies nine further allusions to him: see Mazzucchi (2002), 159. For the influence of Cicero on the *Dialogue*, see Introduction, pp. 64–72.

47 *Strategicon* 7.A.10 similarly prescribes that cavalry should carry emergency rations in their saddlebags even in battle so that, if they follow up a victory, they will not go hungry before supplies arrive. *Strategicon* 5.4 prescribes the supplies that an army must take with it routinely. Theophylact Simocatta, *Histories* 8.4.7, shows how disastrous can be exclusive reliance on baggage animals when they are lost (in this case, through cold).

48 The language of this exchange (4.54) recalls Plato, *Rep.* 4.423c.

Thomas: What is it?

Menas: (4.55) The thing they call a ‘trench’ – so that the army should never spend an instant, when encamped, without such a defence-work.⁴⁹ It is appropriate that the officers themselves begin this task with their own hands in order to whip up the enthusiasm of the rest. They should also make it an exercise and part of physical training. In peacetime, (4.56) it can perhaps be done rather simply, but in war it must be fitted with stakes, fortified all round with what are called caltrops,⁵⁰ and filled with water if there is any, as well as deploying any other possible means of security.

Thomas: It will also be necessary to prescribe this.

Menas: (4.57) But I don’t think we should pass over, Thomas, one minor point – a thing small to command, but if done, it will be seen not to be unprofitable.⁵¹

Thomas: What do you mean?

Menas: (4.58) Haircut, dress, and everything to do with clothes – so that it will not be permissible for any of the other citizens to change from time to time the style of dress appropriate to their status.⁵² Observing this rule will

49 For a Persian affecting to see a Roman trench, here protecting the Roman front line rather than a fortified encampment, as cowardice, see *Wars* 1.14–15. For references to caltrops, camps etc., see the *Strategicon* *passim* (and the next note). Polybius, *Histories* 6, refers several times to Roman military ditch-making, although Veg., *Epitome* 1.23 laments (with some exaggeration?) that the fortification of camps, with ramparts and ditches, has become obsolete. However, Menander Protector, fr. 23.3, talks of Maurice’s re-introducing the allegedly lost practice of encampment, a subject on which the *Strategicon* has much to say: e.g. 12.B.22.

Failure to entrench camps had long ranked high in the rhetorical catalogue of military laxity: for a C1 BCE example, Sallust, *Iugurthan War* 44. The decline of this practice is routinely bemoaned by late Roman authors, sometimes in connexion with allegations of work-shy ‘barbarian’ auxiliaries, e.g. Veg., *Epitome* 1.21; 3.10.14–20; Amm. Marc. 26.2.6, though he also reports the construction of fortified encampments both as an ideal (e.g. 16.12.12; 25.3.1) and as an actuality (e.g. 25.6.5–7; 31.9.1, 12.4). In the early C6, a well-fortified camp remained an ideal, as here. Depending on circumstances, Roman armies or allies still constructed camps and installations defended by ditches, ramparts and/or palisades (e.g. Marcellinus Comes in 514; *Wars* 1.15.32–33, 1.19.1–11; 2.11.15, 2.13.38, 2.15.13, 2.17.25–28, 2.19.8–15; 6.4.11, 6.7.2, 6.13.2, 16.18–19; Corippus, *Iohannis* 2.265–87; 6.492, 513). So did the Ostrogoths (*Wars* 6. 5.17–18).

50 Lit. *triboloi*: a four-spiked implement thrown on the ground to lame enemy horses, described in *Wars* 7.24.16, in the context of the defence of Rome by Belisarius. This also involved digging deep trenches and filling them with water (*Wars* 5.12), albeit for city, rather than camp defence.

51 4.57 stylistically recalls Plato, *Rep.* 4.423c.

52 Plato, *Rep.* 4.425b. Note here, as elsewhere, the importance the *Dialogue* attaches to the maintenance of not only military, but wider social hierarchy. The *Strategicon* (12.B.1) is also concerned with soldiers’ clothing, but, with the possible exception of its preference for short

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demonstrate the firmness of our resolve; neglecting it, our volatility.

Thomas: None looking at this would think it either unprofitable or in any way lacking in civic virtue.

Menas: (4.59) Does it seem to you, Thomas that we've now said enough about the military aspect of the state? What do you think?⁵³

Thomas: I agree with you, Menas, I agree with all my heart on this. (4.60) Of the two sets of military tasks – one, that of waging war, we have, I think, now covered sufficiently. But the other, that of ensuring the sensitive and just treatment of other citizens and subjects where justice must be done, still remains. (4.61) I think it needs fuller discussion, if war itself derives from the necessity of protecting these people.⁵⁴

Menas: (4.62) What you say is right, Thomas. But instead of using lots of words, I'll try to set out what I think about it through one example.

Thomas: Which in particular?

hair and simple mantles, its requirements are solely related to military efficiency: e.g. boots are not to be worn because they slow men down. The beneficial effect of both sets of recommendations, however, would also be military uniformity.

⁵³ Recalling Plato, *Rep.* 7.530d.

⁵⁴ 4.60–69 reflect the concerns of Plato's *Rep.* 3.416b that the 'Guardians' should not oppress their fellow citizens. Moreover, ill-treatment of non-combatants was (and remains) a problem and potentially counter-productive in both military and political terms: Belisarius flogged soldiers eating fruit which they had stolen for these reasons (*Wars* 3.16.1–8); he is praised for his treatment of peasants and their crops as well as of his own troops (*Wars* 8.1.8–10); when troops, whether Goths or barbarian allies of the Romans, behave badly to civilians, disaster ensues (*Wars* 8.34.4). Cf. Theophylact Simocatta's 'report' (*Histories* 1.1.16ff.) of the dying Emperor Tiberius II's address exhorting Maurice, his successor, to be a good emperor in terms Agapetus would have approved of, not least in cultivating the goodwill of his subjects.

The mere presence of soldiers could cause difficulties for the citizenry, especially given their need for supplies and recruits. Famine in Antioch is plausibly connected with the arrival there in 363 of Emperor Julian's army *en route* for Persia (Socrates, *EH* 3.7); army requisitions and general misbehaviour in Edessa, the base for the Persian War in 502, are catalogued in Ps. Joshua, *Chronicle* 86, 93–96; the monk Shenoute, in the C5, cites similar malpractice in Egypt (Bagnall [1993], 180); John the Lydian, *On Magistracies* 3.70.4, claimed army billeting caused worse suffering than barbarian invasion. In response, the *CTh.* and Justinianic legislation target such malpractice: for example, *Just. Nov.* 33–34 (535) (aimed primarily at military loan-sharking), or *Just. Nov.* 130 (545) (regulating how soldiers must enter and pass through cities). *Strategicon* 1.9, concerned with marching through one's own country in peacetime, emphasises the need to spare cultivated fields and, as *Just. Nov.* 130 puts it, that this 'should cause no damage to taxpayers' (cf. also regulations at *Strategicon* 1.6.10, 7.13). See also Menander Protector, fr. 23.4, reporting that, following Roman military failure because of mistreatment of subjects (in Armenia?), Maurice had tightened up practice. For the relevance of this passage to the dating of the *Dialogue*, see Introduction, p. 20.

Menas: (4.63) As a Persian king, named Firoz,⁵⁵ was going with his army to war and was still marching through his own territory, one of his soldiers, whose horse had become sick, gave the horse, with his corporal's approval, some green ears of corn for food.⁵⁶ (4.64) The owner of the corn shouted that he had been robbed. When the king heard, he summoned the peasant and the soldier with his section commander. Then, having discovered what was the matter, he gathered his officers together and spoke as follows (4.65): 'If our commonwealth had one type of weapon by which alone it could defeat the enemy – even if they happened to be stronger in other regards – and someone was discovered who wished to destroy and obliterate it, what punishment would he deserve?' And they said: 'He should suffer the bitterest death, he and his children and his whole family.' Firoz replied: 'It is clear, I think, to everyone that the bodies of the (4.66) Romans, their horses, their bows, their missiles and their spears are stronger than ours.⁵⁷ We confront our foes, armed against these things with a single

55 The Sasanian king, Firoz ('Perozes'), ruled from 459 to 484. Both here (and earlier on Cyrus), our author speaks with respect of the Persians and their commitment to the prime Platonic virtue of justice. This contrasts with the hostile attitude taken towards them in Procopius, Agathias, Maurice and other C6 writers, although Agathias (*Histories* 2.30) also refers to the 'very widespread tale that the Persian government was supremely just, the union of philosophy and kingship as in the writing of Plato ...' which misled the philosophers fleeing from Justinian's measures against the School of Athens in 529 into seeking refuge in Persia. The present passage seems to corroborate Agathias. See Averil Cameron (1969; 1970) for the (alleged) Platonism of the contemporary Persian king, Chosroes.

56 'Corporal': literally *dekarkhos*, a generic 'commander of ten', hence roughly 'corporal'. We have here, presumably, a fictional tale; although according to Philip Rance in correspondence, there is some evidence, albeit meagre and fragile, that Sasanian armies were organised along 'decimal' lines. See e.g. Amm. Marc. 19.9 for Persians besieging five deep in 359. (The military hierarchy within a *tagma*, c.500 men, approximately a battalion, is given in *Strategicon* 1.3, whose terminology does not entirely correspond with that of the *Dialogue* since the former is a technical manual of later date.) On the Eastern frontier, where the border marked no cultural divide and where Persians were prone, during their own invasions, to exploit provincial dissidence to their advantage, there were even stronger prudential imperatives for not upsetting the locals. Theophylact Simocatta, *Histories* 3.15.4, claims, however, that Persian troops, unlike the Romans, were not supported by their treasury, but were forced to support themselves until they arrived in enemy territory. If anything, this would increase the temptation to exploit local farmers.

57 *Wars* 1.14.21 for Belisarius' claim of Roman superiority to Persians in terms of strength (though this is less important than good discipline in ensuring victory); *Wars* 1.18.33–34 for the alleged superiority of Roman archery. This reflects the different ways a bow could be used (i.e. different 'locks' and 'draws'): the 'Roman lock' allowed the maximum draw of the bowstring level with the archer's ear for a more forceful precision shot (*Wars* 1.1.15 – comparing contemporary archery favourably with that of Homer's heroes; Syrianus Magister,

weapon, justice – and with this we govern our subjects with mildness and humanity. (4.67) But these men’ – he indicated the man who had taken the corn and his corporal – ‘have been discovered to have lit a fire, albeit with only a little wood, but with the intention of burning this weapon of ours. Is not lighting a small fire to destroy what is lying near at hand the same thing as an act of injustice which originates in something small but is not checked? To control or check both when they are growing and vigorous is beyond human power.’ (4.68) Having spoken in this way, he ordered the corporal to be impaled and the soldier stoned by the army, while the brigadier under whom they served received some other penalty.⁵⁸

This is an example of the mercy and humanity of the Persians towards their subjects which still rules amongst them. If there happens to be a famine in their country or some other disaster, then the presence of the army offers (4.69) encouragement and aid. You have here, Thomas, an example which the rulers of the state and, above all, the imperial majesty itself can very easily exploit to demonstrate an harmonious commonwealth of guardians, other citizens and subjects.⁵⁹ And (4.70) if they make the guardians themselves participate in the same justice, they will share in giving justice: for being just themselves, they will not think it right to do injustice to anyone. And, if they do try to, such things will not last long: ‘like spring flowers, they are seen in season,’ says Demosthenes, ‘but then collapse upon themselves.’⁶⁰

Thomas: (4.71) That, Menas, would be reasonable and reasonably said. But how do you think the guardians of the state must be given a share in justice?

Menas: I, at any rate, Thomas, think that it is both just and fitting, first, to give them both rations and pay worthy of their service as guardians – and

On Strategy 44.24–27). In battle, however, the Persians traditionally favoured more rapid archery or ‘shower-shooting’ with less powerful or less tightly strung bows drawn only to the chest (*Strategicon* 11.1.15–17, 41–53; cf. *Wars* 1.18.31–34; 8.8.34). See also n. 39 above.

58 Army discipline: the corporal (*dekarkhos*) shares the punishment for his subordinate’s offence. Although this exemplary tale is fictional and set in the C5 Persian army, the legal principle is consonant with the penalty outlined at *Strategicon* 1.6.11, where a *dekarch* shares the blame for his subordinate’s neglect of his equipment. ‘Brigadier’ translates *chiliarchos*: see n. 26 above. Impaling was a standard Roman field punishment for serious crimes (e.g. mutiny) and employed by Belisarius (e.g. *Wars* 3.12.9) for its deterrent effect in maintaining good military order: for instance, two Massagetae, tribal allies, were impaled; when drunk, they had killed a comrade.

59 For the concept of the state as comprising a musical harmony of its constituent (hierarchically) ordered parts, see 5.136 below and Introduction, p. 69. For the sentiments expressed here, see Plato, *Rep.* 7.524a, 529d

60 Demosthenes, *Or.* 2.10. Possibly proverbial, as it sits oddly here.

with gratitude. And, in addition, other worthy honours to those who are deserving, whether living or dead, as well as the appropriate care in old age to those who are old. To the children of the fallen, education and feeding at public expense <should also be given,> and especially to the parents of the departed, should they survive.⁶¹ (4.72) And all this will not only be, in my opinion, to the advantage of the direct beneficiaries, but more truly the state itself will benefit from the state! Or do you think that the survivors, when they see such things happening, will not fight much more enthusiastically in the wars and expose their very soul to dangers on its behalf? Just as if they see and experience the opposite, they would be disposed in the opposite way.

Thomas: Menas, all this must necessarily be so.

Menas: (4.73) It wouldn't, therefore, be perverse, Thomas, to set up military units in which veterans would be enrolled and, on their death, their sons would draw the necessary rations. < These men will take the positions of their fathers>.⁶² For it would not only be naturally unjust but also inappropriate for the state itself, <if> those who had sweated and laboured for it

61 For similar care of survivors at public expense, see Plato, *Rep* 3.416d–e; 5.464c. In classical Athens the sons of citizens killed in battle were educated at public expense and paraded in the theatre in full armour at some point before the performance of the tragedies at the festival of the Greater Dionysia, celebrated in late March. However, this may be another covert criticism of the emperor and/or a contribution to a wider debate. Some earlier laws on the fiscal immunity of veterans, which survive in the *Justinianic Code* (e.g. *CJ* 12.47.1–2, re-enacting legislation of Constantine, Arcadius and Honorius), already provided for the re-enlistment of the sons of officers, including centurions, to their fathers' units. However, there is no reference to discharge bounties or grants of land, while other similar provisions and privileges appear to have lapsed by the C6. Moreover, the emperor took steps to curtail a military pay system that related pay to seniority and had enabled long-serving veterans to retire in comfort and 'leave from their own property some consolation to members of their own families'. Measures were also taken in regard to the so-called *scholarii*, soldiers in theory but who served as largely ceremonial palace guards: they were allegedly pressured into giving up their pay as an alternative to being forced to fight! For these grievances (and others, sometimes, unlike those of the *scholarii*, justified), see *SH* 22–26.

Under Maurice, however, wounded veterans were apparently settled in cities and pensioned off. He also provided that the only or eldest sons of men killed in action should succeed to their father's rank and emoluments, up to the rank of *biarkhos* (a junior officer): *CJ* 12.47.3 (preserved in the *Basilika*, 57.7.3, a Byzantine law code completed in 888). Also Theophylact Simocatta, *Histories* 7.1: he does not, however, go into detail but merely refers to 'children' inheriting unspecified rank and pay and, from his account of events in 594, it remains unclear whether Maurice simply reiterated or amended/extended the earlier legislation. See too Jones (1964), ch. 17, esp. 675 and 1275. As with Procopius, John the Lydian, Evagrius and other surviving critics of Justinian's fiscal policies, there is, however, no recognition of the financial pressures on the regime forcing such economies (and allegedly oppressive tax-collection).

62 <> translates what Mazzucchi plausibly supposes has been lost in a lacuna.

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were left in need and the rest left unmotivated.

Thomas. It would be necessary for this to come about – and rightly so for a just state.

Menas: (4.74) Thomas, I have said what I think about the science and practice of war. It is for you to judge whether what I have said is valuable or in accordance with reason.

Thomas: I think everything's perfect, Menas. It would not be easy to disagree, even if one were *very* disputatious!

BOOK V – THE IDEAL STATE

Translator's Synopsis

Sections:

1–8 introduce the scope of the discussion: namely, obtaining a 'scientific' definition of the concept of the imitation of God, by rational argument, where possible; and by 'correct opinion', where this is not contrary to reason.

9–16 set out the elements of 'imperial (or royal) science', by analogy with medicine, in terms of its *laws*, *doctrines* and *practices*. These are defined in 5.13–15 and fleshed out in what follows.

17–114 outline the constitution of the state. Thus sections 17–21 set out the first five *laws* of 'imperial science' outlining the constitutional basis of the state: Law 1 – the legitimate proclamation of the emperor; Law 2 – establishes the senate; Law 3 – deals with the selection of 'High Priests' (or bishops); Law 4 – deals with the selection of the highest officials; and Law 5 – deals with the actual laws of the state. After a lacuna, sections 22–39 are occupied with the nature, responsibilities and selection of the 'senate' of the 'optimates'. Sections 40 onwards are concerned with the office of emperor, while the significance of the emperor's legitimacy and his election is spelt out in sections 46–53. Sections 54–97 are concerned with the chief offices of the administration, including the bishops, their responsibilities, the selection of their holders, and, more generally, ensuring a well-run state, enjoying the 'unshakeable protection of the laws'. Sections 97–114 explain that the greatest (internal) threat to a well-ordered polity is posed by the circus and theatre factions.

115–22 comprise, following another lacuna in the text, the final section dealing with *doctrines*. They describe the state of knowledge of the true emperor, based on his metaphysical understanding of the universe and the fact that he now carries within himself the divine likeness.

123–71 build on the above by describing the *practices* of the ideal ruler (in terms of the various virtues he possesses: goodness, wisdom, power, justice, foresight etc.) arising from his harmony with heaven and the universe.

172–95 constitute a metaphysical digression central to the philosophy of the *Dialogue* on the origin and goal of political science. This is shown to be part of the divine scheme for securing the return of the human race to 'their mother city above' (Section 194).

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196–203 return to analysing the implications of the doctrine of the emperor's imitation of God.

204–14 draw together the conclusions of the earlier discussion and confirm them by reference to the ancient Greek philosophers: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Xenophon.

215–22 (end of MS) re-emphasise the need for political education in rulers with a corresponding denunciation of the venality of most politicians.

Summary¹

The contents of the Fifth Book on Political Science are these:

- On imperial rule;²
- On what imperial science shares with, and how it differs from the other sciences;
- What is the goal of imperial rule, and what it needs in terms of special laws, ordinances and practices;
- On the special laws of imperial rule;
- On ordinances;
- On practices;
- What are the particular characteristics of imperial science by which it goes beyond other arts and sciences;
- That the true emperor must govern human affairs with regard to the imitation of God and the Divine;³
- How the emperor may know himself, God and the Divine, and, with this knowledge, may govern the state according to this model;⁴
- That dissimilar views of the state are expressed to those expressed

1 This Summary belongs to the original text, unlike the preceding Synopsis which I have myself inserted with help from Mazzucchi and Matelli (1985).

2 'Emperor' and 'imperial' translate here and elsewhere the Greek *basileus* and cognates. See Agapetus ch. 15, with n. 25.

3 The *Dialogue* shares with Agapetus (and others – see Introduction, pp. 60ff.) the concept of imperial rule as the imitation of God, while drawing different practical conclusions.

4 'Model' translates *paradeigma*, used by Plato to signify not just 'pattern, plan or model', but also – as probably here – the divine exemplars of which earthly things are made (*Rep.* 9.592b). In Plato, *Timaeus* 28–29, *paradeigma* denotes the pattern employed by the creator of the world. For Aristotle (*Met.* 991a21, 1013a27), the word denoted the Platonic *ideas*, in contrast to their mundane images (*eikones*). For the underlying philosophy of this chapter, see Introduction, pp. 54ff. above.

- by others, including an objection to some views expressed by Plato;⁵
- Comparison of the *Republic* of Plato and of Cicero, and also of the whole philosophy of Plato and Aristotle.⁶

Menas: (5.1) If we have now spoken at some length about the guardians and military science, Thomas, we have done so to the best of our ability.⁷ It now remains for us to investigate imperial power itself and whether it is possible to find a really worthy concept of the imitation of God – which was shown earlier to be the essence of imperial rule.⁸

Thomas: (5.2) We must succeed in this at all costs, Menas. And if we don't, it would be the same as if we had not gone through the other arguments. It would be like a sculptor, for instance, who had successfully modelled all the other parts and the limbs, and had fitted them together well – but the head was left out!

Menas: (5.3) Shouldn't we, therefore, if you're content, first investigate if we can easily give a scientific account of the imitation of God?⁹

Thomas: Yes, this we must investigate.

Menas: (5.4) Suppose, Thomas, that someone were to suggest to you

5 There is no sustained critique of Plato in the surviving text, although our author explicitly dissents from Plato's *Rep.* e.g. in allowing his 'optimates' (*aristoi*) to marry (5.35), or in the importance attached to the primacy of law, rather than to the unconstrained rule of his 'Guardians' (5.13, 5.17ff.). Departure from the *Rep.*, however, seems not so much disagreement with Plato in principle as a preference for the more realistic, 'second-best', compromise political arrangements Plato advocated in his *Laws* (e.g. 739a–e; see Introduction, p. 65). Neoplatonists had apparently accepted that the arrangements proposed in the *Laws* were just such compromises (for sources, O'Meara [2002], 58–59). For the C9 Patriarch, Photius, however, our author's criticism (unspecified) of Plato was 'justified' (*Bibliotheca* 37, Introduction, p. 10 above), which hints at some more profound, now lost disagreement. O'Meara (2002), 59, considers, however, that too much should not be made of this remark owing to Photius' wider hostility to the *Rep.* (Photius, *Letter* 187).

6 Not in the surviving text, although the influence of Cicero is pervasive. See Introduction, pp. 64ff., and *Dialogue* 4.53 with n. 46 for full list of citations.

7 Compare *Rep.* 6.484a.

8 In a lost book. Similar references to lost passages occur in what follows in e.g. 5.9, 5.17 and 5.18.

9 A fundamental question, as Plotinus understood (*Enneads* 6.9.7), when he writes of King Minos of Crete legislating in the image of 'Zeus'. For to the extent that Zeus (or references in this chapter to 'God') denotes the ineffable, transcendent Neoplatonic 'One', who is beyond knowledge, how can this be possible? But the problem is more general: how can political science, with its this-worldly concerns, be modelled on *any* form of transcendental knowledge? Menas offers a brief Platonising explanation here. See, on this, O'Meara (2002), 55ff., and below 5.58ff. for a later attempt to address the difficulties.

that you drew a portrait of, let's say, your grandfather. But it turned out that you did not know what he really looked like, as he had died before you were born. What else could you say in reply other than that this was impossible on two counts: you were not a skilled artist and you didn't know what he looked like?¹⁰

Thomas: What else, Menas, could one reply?

Menas: (5.5) So, in our investigation of the imitation of God – which we have said imperial power has been legitimately shown to be¹¹ – if we omit some detail in our account of imperial science through our ignorance of the archetype, it will still be possible to obtain this from analogy with works of divine craftsmanship.¹²

Thomas: Most probably.

Menas: (5.6) Consider, then, Thomas, how I envisage our enquiry on this matter.

Thomas: How in particular?

Menas: If someone wanted to reason about the nature of man, he would reasonably adduce both what man had in common with animals and plants, and in what respects he differed.

Thomas: Very probably.

Menas: (5.7) Again, in the case of the soul, having found that it exists, but not being able to discover its properties scientifically, different people would have different opinions about it.

Thomas: Absolutely true.

10 Literally 'not to know his form/appearance (*idea*)'. This last word was routinely used by Plato (e.g. in the *Rep.*) to denote the 'Ideas/Forms' which, for him, constituted the ultimate reality. Its use here, in a non-technical context, paves the way for later arguments that use this and similar words in a technical, philosophical sense.

11 In a lost book. See n. 8 above.

12 The same word as in Greek: *arkhetupos*. It designates the ideal, Platonic template employed by God. *Theion demiourgematon* ('works of divine handiwork/craftsmanship'). Our author does not simply write 'works of God'. Creation of the material world tended to be assigned in Platonic (including Neoplatonic) thought to a 'demiurge'. The key text is Plato, *Timaeus*, for the 'demiurge' as God, intellect and creator of the material world, though 'lower' in Neoplatonic thought than 'the One'. (For the centrality of the *Timaeus* in later Platonic thought, see Edwards [2006]). Note that here, and elsewhere in the Neoplatonic tradition – though not universally – as well as amongst some other C6 writers (e.g. John the Lydian, *On Magistracies* 2.71), the creator does *not* create the universe from nothing (*de nihilo*), which is the Christian doctrine of creation, but from some pre-existent substrate. See Sorabji (1983), esp. chs. 13ff., for a classic analysis. It does not follow that, because our author apparently believed in (some form of) divine creation, he was necessarily a Christian. For the 'creationist' beliefs of Plato (and others), see Sedley (2007).

Menas: (5.8) So in our investigation into imperial science, we shall think we've discovered scientifically what it is possible to discover by means of reason; but where that fails, <we can proceed> by means of correct opinion and logically, our steps guided by the divine creation itself.¹³

Thomas: That would be eminently reasonable, Menas.

Menas: Let us investigate then, if you are content, what it¹⁴ has in common with other sciences, and in what it is superior to them.

Thomas: We must definitely investigate this.

Menas: (5.9) We have already discussed how it differs from philosophy in general, and also how imperial and political philosophy are identical in so far as they are about the imitation of God.¹⁵

Thomas: Very true. It has been demonstrated.

Menas: (5.10) Shall we then, if you're content, consider the question in relation to medicine, in so far as it resembles philosophy – if indeed it was well said that philosophy is the medicine of souls, and medicine the philosophy of bodies?

Thomas: I'm very content. Let us investigate accordingly.

Menas: (5.11) Medical science, Thomas, claims to be about human bodies: its aim is health; its end is obtaining this. It is clear to everyone that this is profitable for mankind.

Thomas: Very clear indeed.

Menas: (5.12) This skill requires a great deal of additional preparation to achieve its professed goal – as doctors know.¹⁶ But three things above all are essential if it is to succeed properly and be, so far as possible, scientific.

Thomas: Which three do you mean?

Menas: (5.13) I mean the law, doctrines, and habits of actual practice. The law is that in respect of which he applies the proper rules of medicine and not illegitimate ones or those of other professions; and in order that the doctor, when he goes into the houses of strangers and is entrusted with the bodies of free people – and, what is more, of both sexes – treats his patients with moderation and in good faith, and also fulfils what the Hippocratic law

13 *Orthe doxa* (correct opinion), in Platonic epistemology, falls short of true knowledge which is based upon knowledge of the 'forms': e.g. Plato *Rep.* 10.601b–d. The complex and controversial arguments are well dealt with in Annas (1981), chs. 8–11. Menas' argument is Platonic in so far as it involves reasoning by analogy from the material world to the 'higher' intellectual world. But he avoids here technical Platonic terminology.

14 I.e. imperial science.

15 In a lost earlier discussion.

16 Literally 'as doctors' children know'. A circumlocution for (here) doctors going back to Homer, but also found, for instance, in Plato: e.g. *Rep.* 3.407e.

and oath require.¹⁷

(5.14) Professional doctrines are those principles by which a doctor advises himself on what is appropriate: he reasons that, being a doctor, he must have a good understanding of his craft and practise it well, be superior to his patients and other lay people, and, when he is instructed to cure others, not fall behind either in technique or in his reputation in regard to it. He will think it a matter for reproach if anyone, whether a fellow-practitioner or a lay-person, becomes more famous. (5.15) As for his actual practices, he will employ those that, used together, will achieve a cure.

To sum up, the law will both subject him to the ethical requirements of his craft – even against his will, if he possesses the sense of shame of a free man – and protect him from things which do not belong to it. The ethical principles will legislate for appropriate behaviour in his soul, not through external pressure, but through the persuasion of reason, the shame of conscience, and his nature as a free man. His actual practice, characterised in this way, will be appropriate and worthy of his art.

Thomas: (5.16) This will necessarily apply to the art of medicine. But, Menas, how is it to be seen in regard to imperial rule?¹⁸

Menas: Imperial rule, Thomas, is concerned with affairs of state. It has, as its goal, the well-being of the state in accordance with justice. Its completion consists in putting this into practice with the benefit which necessarily follows from this: the salvation of men. There is no one, I think, who could doubt this.

Thomas: Absolutely no one, at any rate, who had any understanding of culture.¹⁹

17 Medical analogies are Platonic: see e.g. *Theaetetus* 166d–167c. Both contemporary repute and Plato's interest explain the reference to Hippocrates. For another medical analogy in statecraft, see Agapetus, ch. 16. Hippocrates of Cos (c.469–399? BCE), the most famous physician of antiquity; for his complete works, actual and attributed, see ed. Littré (1961–82). Plato mentions Hippocrates several times, notably in *Phdr.* 270c, where he suggests that Hippocrates claimed one could not understand the nature of the body without understanding the whole man. Along with Galen (129–199/216? CE), Hippocrates was considered a basic source of medical knowledge in Byzantium from the C4 onwards. His *Oath* requires a doctor to swear by Apollo, Health (*Hygeia*) and Panacea (the two last divinities being personifications) to revere his teacher and his family, never to administer poison, use the knife (= do surgery), abuse his patients or breach their confidences.

18 Averil Cameron (1985), 250, reads 5.16ff. as a warning to heed the interests of the 'optimates'.

19 'Culture/education' (*paideia*) is a key concept in the *Dialogue* and late antiquity generally. At one level, it denotes those who have received the high literary and rhetorical education of antiquity; at another, it defines a style of life and social behaviour whose possession

Menas: (5.17) To this end, therefore, Thomas, the imperial power will, first, legislate for itself concerning its legitimate proclamation so that the man who is equal to it and who takes its name and is about to unite himself with it may, as we said earlier,²⁰ justly receive it when it is given by God and offered by the citizens. (5.18) A second law will deal with the senate of the *optimates*,²¹ with their upbringing and education,²² their honours and ranks, and also, in the way we've said,²³ the political order. (5.19) The third law will govern the selection of high priests – to take place with the greatest respect and fear of the divine, but also with the sworn testimonies of the cities.²⁴ (5.20) A fourth will deal with the highest offices and the selection

marks out the empire-wide upper-class minority who, by possessing it, are, allegedly, uniquely capable of holding positions of public responsibility. *Arrivistes*, such as John the Cappadocian (Praetorian Prefect 531–32 and 532–41: *PLRE* IIIA, 627ff.) and other senior officials of Justinian who supposedly lacked it, are savaged by Procopius (e.g. *Wars* 1.24) and John the Lydian (e.g. *on Magistracies* 3.51) and regarded as 'second class' by our author (see 5.33, with note, below). It was, therefore, a highly charged political concept.

For *paideia* and its political significance, see Brown (2002), Watts (2006); for the syllabus, which changed little from the Hellenistic period up to the C6 and beyond, Cribiore (2001; 2007); for the more specialist Neoplatonic philosophical syllabus, O'Meara (2003). Bourdieu (trans. 1996) is the classic modern study of how education can create a secular aristocracy. The implication of Thomas' remark that 'the uneducated' would not necessarily agree indicates that the concept of kingship outlined here was contested or capable of different interpretations, one of which – that the emperor is not *ultimately* constrained by anything outside himself – we find in Agapetus. See Averil Cameron (1985), 252ff. and Introduction, p. 34. for other views of the imperial office.

20 In a lost book.

21 *Sunkletos* is frequently used by Greek writers from Polybius (C3 BCE) onwards to designate the Roman Senate. For 'optimates', see Bk. 4, n. 31 above.

22 'Education' here translates *paideia*. See n. 19 above.

23 In another lost book.

24 *Arkhiereis*, literally 'high priests'. This archaising word almost certainly refers, in the real world, to bishops. Their appearance, even in a 'Platonic' text, testifies to the growing contemporary power and influence, secular as well as religious, of the bishops which no work on politics with pretensions to relevance could ignore: for instance, senators could not have elevated Justin II, then a senior court official, the *curopalates*, to the throne as Justinian's successor without the support of the patriarch. See Rapp (2005a) for the role of the C6 episcopate more generally. No less significant is how bishops are here seen enmeshed in the wider political hierarchy. Our author's vision is in fact close to that of the symbiosis of church and state (assuming the two can be distinguished), with the emperor for practical purposes predominant, for which Justinian's *Novel 6* provides the single best, though far from only, illustration. Note also how in his politically more realistic *Laws*, and in contrast to the *Rep.*, Plato makes extensive provision for religious matters. Such references provide no clear indication of the religious beliefs of the author: see Introduction, pp. 76ff.).

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of their respective holders from the optimates.²⁵ (5.21) A fifth will concern the laws of the state and the unshakeable protection afforded them. A good emperor will regard <the violation of the laws> as more dreadful for him than for his subjects ...²⁶

(5.22) <so long as> the new constitution,²⁷ which has been recently promulgated, is not <yet> in force, the old customs remain valid until <the new law> has appeared in the cities.²⁸ We don't then need to examine, my dear chap, if it is as you say; we only need to investigate whether he is one of the optimates and competent to govern.²⁹ (5.23) I don't think you would be able to maintain that they should not be optimates.³⁰ But as for what you regard as competences, let us examine both of <your> requirements: natural gifts³¹ and education. Of these, education, which lies in our power, would not be impossible <to secure>. As to the selection of natural gifts, you may think once again that this is possible were you to think about the other animals, those we call irrational.³² (5.24) Or don't we see in the cities lots of what they call stables and kennels and other people involved in every kind of hunting, who are concerned with selection by breed, with the protection and nurture of their animals, with monitoring their needs and their food, and preventing their mating with non-pedigree and inferior stock?³³ (5.25) And don't we see some men undertake long journeys, and others brave great seas and, to put it simply, expose themselves to labours, dangers – and, I would add, expense – in seeking out the best quality of animal and putting

25 Mai connects this outline with the third heading in the summary introducing Bk. 5. What follows deals with the laws etc mentioned in headings 4–6 in the same summary.

26 This sentence is incomplete in the MS, and followed by a lacuna. My tentative restoration supposes that the author is making the point also stressed, notwithstanding their differences, by Agapetus ch. 27, with note: the emperor may be the imitation of God but he has a special duty to obey the law nonetheless. See Introduction, p. 38.

27 Translates *politikos nomos*, literally 'state (or public) law'.

28 The translation of this further sentence is tentative, though it reflects Mazzucchi's Italian version. It seems to refer to transitional arrangements for the period between the promulgation of what is in effect the new constitution sketched in 5.17–21 and its coming into operation.

29 An apparent reference to a section of dialogue lost in the lacuna between 5.21–22, which appears to have discussed qualification for high office.

30 Compare Plato, *Rep.* 5.456c, 471c, 471e.

31 Strictly, 'nature' (*physis*).

32 Concern here for the selective breeding and careful nurture of future rulers, with reference to animal husbandry, reflects *Rep.* 4.424a and 5.459a–b. There is more on 'political' eugenics in Plato, *Timaeus* 18ff.

33 Literally 'with bastards and the ignoble'.

the highest value on possessing them?³⁴

Thomas: (5.26) This is true, Menas. And other animals, even humbler than these, are men's concern – so that they extend their care to birds and the like!

Menas: (5.27) I think it would be much better if this happened with men, Thomas, not only as a possibility but as a means of salvation for the cities.

Thomas: Absolutely, Menas, and in every way.

Menas: (5.28) So this is how the selection and nurture of the best nature might reasonably happen, as we have discussed, in so far as it is in our power.³⁵ But I think it is right, Thomas, that those making concessions to nature should benefit from the heuristic and maieutic approach to the virtue of the optimates, so that it may be as pure and uncontaminated as possible. For many of the works of nature are unobtainable, however hard men strive for them.³⁶

Thomas: What is it you're saying, Menas? How is it to come about?

Menas: (5.29) If some of those, Thomas, brought up in this way degenerate in respect of their nobility of soul, as also tends to happen with seeds,³⁷ and their judgement and worth becomes impaired – whether in their youth, maturity or at any other time – then they should be removed from the list of the optimates and enrolled in the other orders of the city, whether military or civilian, as is appropriate in each case.

Thomas: (5.30) Absolutely right.

Menas: I think that would not be inappropriate, Thomas. Nor would the converse.

34 Gillian Clark has kindly drawn my attention to the Neoplatonic philosopher, Iamblichus (c.245–c.325): in his *Life of Pythagoras* 212–13, he similarly contrasts careless human breeding with the care taken with dogs (although some of this 'careful breeding', e.g. for show purposes, has had dire genetic consequences). Note also perhaps Xenophon, *On Hunting*, for similar concerns for breeding and training of dogs, where he favourably compares the huntsman with the politician.

35 For paras. 5.28–34 compare *Rep.* 3.415b–c; 4.423c–d.

36 This obscure sentence, for whose elegant translation I am indebted to Gillian Clark, appears to mean that discovering or obtaining the necessary virtue (or excellence) in the optimates is not always straightforward or possible; nature is not foolproof; eugenics may not be enough. We should, therefore, not forego further investigation of methods by which the necessary virtues may be found and developed. That is, we do our best to select for excellence and nurture it; but we have to work with what we get. So we shall also need Socratic education.

'Maieutic', literally 'pertaining to midwifery', alludes to the Socratic metaphor for his method of eliciting from others what was latent in their minds, but which they did not consciously realise: see e.g. Plato, *Theaetetus* 161e.

37 Seeds literally degenerate: they revert to their wild state.

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Thomas: What do you mean?

Menas: (5.31) We must always be on the lookout to see if anyone can be found for recruitment to the optimates from the other orders in the state,³⁸ someone who is naturally magnificent³⁹ and possesses the other political virtues. A new office will be set up for this purpose to identify and search out such men. Every effort must be made to import them from every country, not only from those subject to the state, but from barbarian lands, should that be the case, and from anywhere else.⁴⁰ (5.32) If they say it's the most important thing of all to secure a good manager for a private estate, how much more necessary would it be for the state?

Thomas: Such provision is definitely justified, Menas!

Menas: (5.33) But I don't think we must mix these 'discoveries' promiscuously with the other optimates. We should create a second, separate college of optimates, just as the offices⁴¹ given to each would be separate. Thus, it would be clear in the state what excellence was due to nature alone and which to upbringing and nature together. In addition, it would reveal those in these orders who were more capable of the knowledge <required in> each office.⁴² On the other hand, if at some point someone was proved to be

38 Literally, 'the city'. The *Dialogue* is about the governance of the Roman Empire. But in deference to its Platonic precedent, where the (then autonomous) city is the subject of political analysis, the archaic term is preferred.

39 Literally, 'naturally having magnificence' – *megaloprepeia*: a grandiloquent term applied to individuals by e.g. Plato (*Rep.* 6.486a), Isocrates (9.2) and Aristotle (*Nic. Eth.* 1107b17).

40 The reference is to recruiting able 'ethnic outsiders' of all kinds: both 'barbarian' generals, for instance, such as Stilicho in the previous century, of Vandal parentage and Western military supremo until his execution in 408, but also eunuchs. The latter played an increasingly important role in the church, army and public administration. As castration was (theoretically) illegal, many were imported, including the C6 general, Narses, who completed the reconquest of Italy in 562.

41 Literally 'authority'.

42 5.30–33 gloss the Platonic view that philosophers must rule (Plato, *Rep.* Bks. 5–7). Cf. Agapetus ch. 17. They criticise, by implication, the way individuals were increasingly recruited into the elite under Justinian. Positively, 5.30–31 recognise the importance of bringing in 'new men' of merit into even the highest levels of the machinery of government from wherever they might be found. John the Cappadocian, Praetorian Prefect 532–41, is an excellent example. Even Procopius – otherwise extremely hostile to him – conceded his outstanding ability and the respect Justinian had for it (*Wars* 1.24.12). For the assimilation of members of provincial elites since late C3/C4 into a new 'service aristocracy', see Heather (1994). See also above n. 19 and Brown (2002).

Native ability and expertise were increasingly important: thus, the C6 manual, *On Strategy* (1–3), sees only honesty and technical expertise as requirements for the public service; Justinian (*Institutes*, *Proem* 7) offers civil service jobs to those who have studied (only) the

inadequate,⁴³ he would easily be removed by the appropriate authority. The same number, however, ten times ten, would be assigned to each category.

Thomas: This would be reasonable, Menas.

Menas: (5.35) Let the optimates' houses be on the Acropolis, next to the imperial palace and apart from everyone else.⁴⁴ But they would not live communally, as Plato favoured:⁴⁵ each would have his own establishment with his wife and children so that he might practise domestic economy as part of political virtue.⁴⁶ (5.36) Nor shall we worry that, in their relations with women, men who by their nature and education prescribe a temperate life for others will not observe the law on procreation. And, generally, would not the race of optimates be competent to regulate themselves while regulating others?

Thomas: (5.37) It would be fitting for it to be done in this way.

Menas: It would not be unfitting, Thomas, in expenditure terms either, if everything they needed for sustenance and the other necessities of life were allocated to them out of public funds according to their rank. If anyone happened to have a property of his own, let it be administered in the interests of his relatives. (5.38) How much more shall those be regulated who legislate that others shall not add to their private property out of public funds!⁴⁷

law. This, however, was resented by those who either felt that their birth entitled them to office (cf. Agapetus, ch. 4) or those who resented the success of men without a literary education (*paideia*): see John the Lydian, *On Magistracies* 3.26, 28, 54. Our author's 'solution' is to recognise that able men are needed from whatever source; but he is equally clear that newcomers must still be kept in their (lower) place.

43 Literally, a 'bastard'.

44 *Akropolis* means, literally, 'top of the city'. Here the famous example of Athens is not meant, but the higher ground directly north of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, which was the ancient acropolis of Byzantium, overlooking the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus, where Topkapı Sarayı and Gülhane Park now stand. The imperial palace in the C6 stood conveniently close, due south of the church. See map of Constantinople at p. 231 below.

45 *Rep.* 3.416c–d; 5.457c–d, for the segregated, communal and austere, money-free life proposed for his 'Guardians', which echoes contemporary (idealised) C4 BCE Spartan practice. Plato's arguments for these arrangements included maintaining their moral purity and avoiding the resentment of the lower orders. Our author felt the need to justify this departure from the Master; but the confidence he places in the virtue and self-control of his ruling elite owes more to his class sympathies than realism. See n. 5 above.

46 Plato, *Rep.* 4.425d–e.

47 Here the *Dialogue* comes closer to contemporary concerns. Officials were paid out of the public purse, even if their income from this source could easily be exceeded by fee income (e.g. John the Lydian, *On Magistracies* 3.27) as well as numerous forms of extortion. Financial abuses by officials are the subject of fierce complaints throughout Procopius in both his *Wars* and the *Secret History*. The scale of the problem is shown by the repeated efforts in

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Thomas: That, Menas, would not only be fitting – it would be an obligation.

Menas: (5.39) This ordering of the optimates would be the first task, I think, of the imperial power.

Thomas: The very first indeed.

Menas: (5.40) He who is about to rule the empire, therefore, and is one of the optimates, let him ascend to the power of political office. This man would be, so we've argued, he who stands out in terms of both political virtue and indeed of experience of all kinds of public affairs. If he also stood out in terms of rank, age and dignity, he would be still more acceptable – except that priority must be given to virtue.

Thomas: (5.41) And fittingly so. But I think, Menas, that one should not overlook public opinion since the state is a community of many people. Some of these live together virtuously and according to reason, while others are led by opinion and make their judgements, with an eye to blame, in accordance with how things turn out.

Menas: Thomas, what is this popular element you're talking about?

Thomas: (5.42) Speeches for display, Menas, given in public, if anyone is competent to make them, as those people say, in debates about the welfare of the state.⁴⁸ This is something not to be discounted, not even in the context of our discussion. And I've not yet mentioned Demosthenes, who said: 'Fortune plays a great, or rather the greatest role in all human affairs.'⁴⁹

Menas: (5.43) That has nothing to do with virtue or political science –

Justinianic legislation to curb such abuses, both generally (e.g. *Just. Nov.* 8) and in particular provinces (a non-exhaustive list would include *Just. Edict* 13 for Egypt; *Just. Nov.* 32, 34 (Thrace, Illyricum), 30 (Cappadocia). See Kelly (2004) for the significance and ubiquity of financial exchanges, including fees, in the transaction of public business of all kinds.

48 A much restored sentence. Such 'epideictic' speeches – theoretically, for display only – were a long-standing feature of ancient rhetorical, high culture: Cribiore (2001), Mango (1980), ch. 6. Thomas' comment suggests that some took their contents seriously – not least, perhaps, because such ostensibly literary declamations, whether on e.g. themes from classical Greek or Roman history or examples of the kinds of panegyric on which Menander Rhetor gives guidance, were potentially open to construction as being critical of the regime. This is less surprising when one recalls that a literary education was intended to provide the basic mental equipment to put together arguments on 'real' matters of importance: see Roueché (2003). But whatever interpretation one gives to this passage, our author clearly does not normally rate public opinion highly.

49 Demosthenes, *Or.* 2.22. Demosthenes (384–322 BCE), by general agreement the greatest of ancient orators on both political and private subjects, and later fundamental to the rhetorical education (*paideia*) of antiquity.

except in that it is not unusual in the state, as you yourself said,⁵⁰ for public opinion to be connected with nothing so much as with what is intrinsically harmful. But so much for what is in our own power. (5.44) I think, however, we must devise a way in which what is not in our power can also yield benefits.

Thomas: We must devise something, Menas, since you attach such importance to it. But what is it, Menas, and what is the device to achieve it?

Menas: (5.45) I am speaking, Thomas, of the imitation of God amongst men, that is, imperial rule: what is given from God to emperors should be embedded in the state amongst men both justly and in public law. What is administered in this way will be administered reverently, so far as God is concerned, and fittingly amongst men.

Thomas: Explain more clearly what you mean about reverence and justice, about what is lawful and what is fitting.

Menas: (5.46) By legitimacy, Thomas, I mean that the law should be that no citizen should exercise power of his own initiative, against the will or without the knowledge of others, grasp it by force or deceitful scheming, or by winning over the pliant with persuasion, or appropriate power by a pre-emptive use of fear – for this is the way of a tyrant, not of a community.⁵¹ (5.47) Instead, he will accept the imperial authority offered to him by the citizens as if it were an imposition, thinking it to be in itself a personal burden and a public obligation for which he will not be unaccountable to God's judgement and perhaps that of men also. He will accept it more for the salvation of the citizens and will live less for himself than for them.⁵² (5.48) Plato characterised kingship well as not being to the advantage of the holder

50 See 5.41 above.

51 The precise recipe by which Menas proposes in paras. 5.45ff. to achieve this is contestable. But his recognition of the need to ensure that a government's authority (here, that of the emperor) is *legitimate* remains critically important. That our author devotes so much space to its resolution is further circumstantial evidence that Justinian had a 'legitimacy problem': his origins and his wife were humble or worse; he lacked any aristocratic pedigree; he cultivated a political 'constituency' by exploiting the violence of the theatre and circus factions, while his uncle, Justin I, was emperor; he was an 'innovator'. See e.g. Agapetus, ch. 36; Humphress (2005) and Pazdernik (2005); Bell (forthcoming); also Introduction, pp. 5ff. This is not surprising: no C5–6 emperor from Zeno (r. 474–91) onwards, with the possible exception of Anastasius (r. 491–518), entirely satisfied Menas' criteria. It is hard, therefore, not to read this paragraph as critical of Justinian. For the deeper theoretical and practical implications of this selection process, see Introduction, pp. 62ff.

52 For a similar sentiment, cf. 'We know that the State will be fortunate if it should be ruled by men who are unwilling and who resist appointments to public service' (*Novel 1 proem*, of the emperor Marcian, r. 450–57; trans. Pharr).

but of the ruled,⁵³ while Cicero wrote that it was a personal burden to the holder, but rather a concern for the salvation of other people.⁵⁴ (5.49) This is what I mean by legitimacy and how it comes about. Justice comes with the assent of the subjects of the empire and the deliberation of the optimates. Reverence is offering to the Divine everything which is given by Him, as we have said,⁵⁵ and receiving the Divine amongst men. If these things were done in this way, it would, I think, be fitting.

Thomas: It would indeed be fitting. But how, Menas, can all these things happen together and at the same time?

Menas: (5.50) The leaders of all the classes of the city, Thomas, should indeed each nominate three of the optimates whom they think worthy of royal power – after first solemnly swearing to name those whom they themselves indeed judged well suited to promote the common good.⁵⁶ (5.51) After the nominations, common prayers by the citizen body and communal purifications lasting at most three days should be ordained. Then, after the lots for those nominated had been cast by the priests in holy places, in public view⁵⁷ and in accordance with Divine law and custom, he on whom the lot had settled, and to whom God had given it, let him be emperor. (5.52) In this way the citizens will share in both public and legal affairs and God will receive his due: imperial power will be conferred by Him and the public proclamation of the emperor will take place in accordance with the law.

53 A possible reference to Plato, *Politicus* 297a–b.

54 Possibly refers to Cicero, *Rep.* 1.3.4 or 1.55.35, but the similarities are not close. M. Tullius Cicero (106–43 BCE), the greatest Roman orator, was also a statesman, philosopher and political theorist. His political dialogue, *On the Republic*, was a great influence on the present text. See Introduction, pp. 64ff.

55 5.17 above.

56 Mazzucchi's even freer (Italian) translation may capture the thought better: 'after swearing to choose according to their conscience ...' (my trans.). The involvement of the various orders of the state prescribed in what follows for the selection of the ruler could be seen as an example of 'the mixed constitution', combining elements of monarchy, oligarchy and democracy, attributed by Photius to our text, on which see Introduction, pp. 10ff. and 64ff.

57 *Euages* means both 'free of pollution, lawful', and 'bright clear, transparent, in full view of' (*LSJ*). Either would fit here. I have, after hesitating, plumped for the latter on the grounds that holiness and lawfulness is catered for elsewhere, while the need to ensure the transparency of the sortition process (and the avoidance, or suspicion, of fraud) is not otherwise mentioned. Note also how here and elsewhere the *Dialogue* avoids specifically Christian terminology. Even the use of 'God' does not entail a Christian interpretation, given both the theism that characterised Neoplatonic thought generally, or the degree of monotheism in late antique Paganism: see Athanassiadi and Frede (1999). The 'demiurge' (= creator) of Plato's *Timaeus* is regularly called *ho theos* (literally, the god), while in his *Rep.* 10, 'God' is said to be the spectator of the Form of the Bed.

(5.53) If things happen in this way, the outcome will be both just and worthy of a just state in both divine and human terms.⁵⁸

Thomas: Absolutely right.

Menas: (5.54) After the emperor, the question of magistrates and the magistrature follows. I am speaking now of the great magistracies, not of the lesser ones which we called 'subordinate' in our discussion of the statesman.⁵⁹ (5.55) The question of the magistracies should be the first and greatest of imperial concerns both in terms of the selection of magistrates from the optimates and their assignment to magistracies in terms of appropriateness and merit: to military men, the military commands; (5.56) <to political men the political offices>.⁶⁰ We are not now classifying them exactly, since we are opposing civilian to military offices. In truth, however, every office of the state, whatever kind it is, whether military or not, is political and should be called such. (5.57) The number of such magistrates should be as few as possible; they would supervise the other magistracies and magistrates just as the senators should have oversight over all the ranks of society.

58 That is, an emperor will have been selected who is *legitimate* in terms of both his *charismatic* (religious) and *legal* authority. Although the throne is reserved for optimates, the need for all social classes to be involved in the election process is recognised, and for imperial rule accordingly to rest on consensus. This recommendation should also be seen against changes in the coronation rituals for emperors notable from the C5 to the mid-C7: the coronation developed from being a predominantly military occasion in the old Roman style, in which the new emperor was elevated on a shield, to a more emphatically public and Christian one, with the increasing involvement of the patriarch. From the coronation of Constans II in 641, coronations were held in Hagia Sophia. (Justin II was the last emperor to be both raised on a shield and crowned by the patriarch in one and the same ceremony in the palace: Corippus, 2.136). This process placed increasing emphasis on the religious (charismatic) element in imperial legitimacy.

Although the choice of emperor by lot is qualified here (and restricted to a few senators/optimates), choice of officials by sortition was normal in classical Athens after the democracy was established, including in Plato's day, for all public offices (with the important exception of the 10 generals and other military offices). It was regarded as *democratic* because wealth, patronage etc. did not come into play, as they could in elections to influence the electorate in favour of the rich and powerful. Elections were often regarded as *oligarchic* for that very reason. Oligarchs could accept sortition, however, if those among whom the lots were to be drawn were, as here, suitably restricted ([Aristotle], *Constitution of the Athenians* 43ff., *Politics* 6.1317 B 17–21; Davies [2nd ed. 1993], Rhodes [2nd ed. 1993]). More generally on ceremonial, see MacCormack (1981), 240–59; and Averil Cameron (1979, repr. 1981), ch. 18.1, on the evolution of coronation ritual and on Justin II in particular. The *Justinianic Code* (CJ 1.3.46.2) forbids selection by sortition for church office. See also Introduction, pp. 62ff.

59 In a lost book.

60 Mazzucchi's restoration.

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(5.58) Imperial foresight should continuously and effectively arrange and co-ordinate only the structures of government and the general principles of public policy.⁶¹ These should be formed in accordance with the principles of imperial rule existing within himself – in imitation, so far as possible, of the creator⁶² who has within ⁶³ himself the principles of the universe.⁶⁴ (5.59) From this, the well-being and tranquillity of the state can be born, nurtured and, as if sprouting from political roots, flower and come to full bloom watered from the springs of knowledge.⁶⁵ In this way, lesser affairs will not attract to themselves time better given to greater matters of primary care – just as the proliferation of adjacent weeds will absorb the richness of the earth at the expense of more noble seeds, since what is bad by nature is more abundant than what is good. (5.60) In this way, I think, a triple benefit, one closely allied to justice, would accrue to the state: from the imperial office itself would pour, as it were, political illumination on the first state offices beneath it, and through their holding sway, by scientific method, over the second, third and all the other tiers <of offices>. (5.61) The optimates would also take part justly in government and harmoniously regulate everything of all kinds, while all the other classes of the state would be well organised and aware of the closer, and present oversight of superiors appropriate to each of them.

61 Literally ‘the connecting offices and the first causes of political affairs’. The imperial role is thus restricted to generalities and ‘high policy’ while the senate and magistrates get on with the government. This view contrasts strongly with, and therefore seems an implied criticism of, Justinian’s marked activism which was, however, endorsed by Agapetus, ch. 26.

62 Literally, ‘demiurge’: see n. 12 above.

63 This marks the beginning of the latest folio, overlooked by Mai, discovered and discussed by Behr (1974).

64 The *Dialogue* glosses over the intractable problem, which earlier Neoplatonists understood, of how the analogy of god/emperor works: see 5.3 with note. Here, our author simply asserts that the emperor stands in the same relation to earthly government as does ‘God’ to the universe.

65 The relationship of the higher principles, ultimately ‘the One’, to the lower is often represented by Plotinus (e.g. *Enneads* 3.8.10, 5–12) as that of an unquenchable spring, giving of itself to, and becoming in turn part of, the rest of the universe. The language of ‘pouring’, repeatedly employed in the *Dialogue*, is part of this tradition. A late C6/early C7 parallel, with profound implications for hierarchical ordering of relationships in the state (as well as in Heaven and the Church) is provided by the strongly Neoplatonic-influenced (though explicitly Christian) texts of Ps. Dionysius the Areopagite, the *Celestial Hierarchy* and *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. The former traces the emanation of divine wisdom down from God, through the angels, in heaven; the latter traces the same process on earth, through the various levels of the church hierarchy, from the bishop downwards. See, more generally, Corippus, 2.178ff., esp. 200ff., for a similarly senatorially ordered view of the state; Smith (2004), 24, for hierarchy and the botanical analogies used by Plotinus to illustrate his theories of ‘emanation’. Also Introduction, p. 68.

Thomas: (5.62) How many such magistrates do you propose, Menas?

Menas: That, Thomas, would be proportionate to the size of the state, the number of its citizens and regions and, should it be relevant, of subject peoples. (5.63) We have, I think, set ourselves to look at the state in general, one that is temperate and the best, not this or that particular state, as Cicero dealt with that of the Romans.⁶⁶ But, in my view, the selection of ten magistrates from the optimates would be sufficient for the governance of the entire polity.

Thomas: (5.64) In saying that, Menas, you are agreeing with Cicero when he says⁶⁷ that the whole of the imperial concern should be with the selection of ten optimates who would suffice, since they were competent, to select other men whom they would use to administer the state.⁶⁸

Menas: (5.65) Quite true, Thomas. I would willingly agree to this. But there is something else no less, if not more deserving of imperial care – the priestly class, so that holy souls truly suited to sacred tasks tend to the cult of God and to divine matters. For it is on this that nature of her own accord makes men's greatest hopes anchor, and forces them to look up especially in times of peril, as reason clearly shows. (5.66) But in respect of such men,

66 In his *Rep.* 1.46–47. Notwithstanding this wise remark, there is no attempt here to copy e.g. Aristotle, in his *Politics*, in basing conclusions on a wide range of empirical material.

67 Behr (1974), 143, takes what immediately follows as 'indisputably' a quotation from Cicero. Where precisely it ends is, he claims, unclear, owing to the illegibility of the text. Mazzucchi (2002), however, attributes the whole paragraph to Cicero. Its origin, suggests Behr, lies in an early part of the (largely lost) Bk. 5 of Cicero's *Rep.* This apparently dealt with law and its enforcement and with the ideal statesman (*rector* or *moderator rei publicae*). Enough, however, survives to note significant resemblances between Cicero's *rector*, his constitutional ruler, and the *Dialogue*'s ideal emperor – though there is no sense that the *rector* is the 'imitation of God'. It seems appropriate, therefore, that this quotation should fall in a section here dealing with the imperial office and its legal framework (which form the third section of the 'contents page' with which Bk. 5 opens).

68 It is unsurprising that Cicero (and Menas) think in these terms. The reference to 'imperial (or royal) concern' is simply an anachronism. A 'decemvirate', however, was firmly rooted in Roman tradition. Its weakness, in terms of fairness to all classes in the state, was touched on in Cicero's *Rep.* 2.37, which probably accounts for its presence here. According to this tradition, following prolonged plebeian agitation, all regular magistracies were suspended in 451 BCE and replaced by a board of ten men, mainly ex-consuls, who drew up a law code. They were, allegedly, replaced in 450 BCE by a further board who were ousted following an abuse of power, after one or two years, when what is known as 'The Twelve Tables', the earliest extant Roman law code, was produced. The tradition is, however, extremely confused, and it may well be that this 'decemvirate', if it existed, represented a special magisterial commission in Greek style charged with setting up a law code: *CAH* 7²/2 (1989), 114ff., 227ff., with bibliography. Cf. 5.63 above.

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the imperial care we look for here would only be for the high priests alone;⁶⁹ being themselves truly worthy of the priesthood, they could properly take care of the choice and organisation of the second and third ranks, and of all other priests. (5.67) They would keep in mind above all what, through being currently ignored, brings insult to the priesthood, and a diminution of power to the state.

Thomas: What is that, then?

Menas: (5.68) This above all, Thomas: that one should not admit to the priesthood those who just come along or indeed anyone else except for those on whom their worthiness and manner of life confers it. (5.69) For you know, Thomas, of the masses of men unworthy of the business who have come into the priestly order – not only, but including those monks called ‘coenobites’.⁷⁰ (5.70) If these had found a way of life suitable to their natures, they could have been very useful to the state – especially in the army or farming! (5.71) In this way, only the worthy would rightly come forward to the priesthood, while the monasteries would be less burdened with expenses and there would be sufficient ...⁷¹

69 *Arkhierais*, literally ‘high priests’, denoting bishops. See n. 24 above.

70 *Monkish* ill-behaviour, including rioting where monks often acted as violent ‘enforcers’ for prominent bishops, was a well-known scandal (addressed at the ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451: *Acts* [2005], Session 10.73, Session 11.53, Sessions 16.37, Canon 2). But public criticisms of the clergy (as opposed to attacks on ‘heretical clerics’ by their opponents) are harder to find in C6 literature. This may reflect the increasing power of the clergy. However, criticisms of abuses on the part of the higher clergy in *SH* 13 provide collateral evidence, where they are accused of exploitation and venality. So, by implication, does a sizeable body of legislation as, for example, *Just. Nov.* 6, which judged it necessary to regulate the purchase of ecclesiastical offices and removed from clergy responsibilities for tax collection (*Just. Nov.* 123). For other legislation against monkish abuses, including sexual deviance and accommodating runaway peasants and slaves, see again *Just. Nov.* 123, a major piece of ecclesiastical legislation. Patlagean (1977), esp. 301ff., also supports Menas’ claim, by showing why religious vocation could be a less important reason for the choice of the monastic life than the opportunity it offered to escape domestic obligations and those to landlords, and secure a regular (if very modest) income without the uncertainties of peasant agriculture or domestic responsibilities. Many monks, however, were gainfully employed: Moschus’ *Spiritual Meadow* gives many examples, as does Patlagean. Solitary Holy Men, as opposed to monks living communally (‘coenobites’), seem exempt from these strictures, perhaps because their life was so visibly tough.

Note also the classicising, circumlocutory way of referring to coenobites, followed also in *Wars* 1.1.22 and elsewhere, and Agathias, *Histories* 5.5.5 etc., where he avoids the word entirely: see Averil Cameron (1985), 96, for Procopius, and her *Agathias* (1970), 85–87. Cf. the *Dialogue*’s use of ‘high priest’ for ‘bishop’.

71 This marks the end of the ‘new’ folio discovered by Behr (1974). The text breaks off to be resumed below, albeit still severely damaged.

... (5.72)⁷² of the conflicts involving the classes <of the state>,⁷³ and of each of them in respect of provisions and above all physical training.⁷⁴ (5.73) The eighth <Ten⁷⁵> should in every city and subject region gather together persons for enrolment in the army, for their scrutiny and physical training, and also for the enlistment of those who had come from elsewhere to join the army. (5.74) The ninth should seek out men in the cities found to be unemployed and unskilled, investigate those begging without necessity, and expel strangers who were living unnecessarily in cities not their own. In fact, the Spartan expulsion of aliens would not be out of place, if it preserved uncontaminated and unadulterated the customs of the city.⁷⁶ (5.75) The same magistrate would also punish those in particular who had dedicated their sight and hearing – and the whole of their lives – to absurd spectacles and discourses and who, in their folly, had split the cities into two hostile and opposing factions.⁷⁷ The abolition of all these and the appropriate transfor-

72 The subject has now changed to a description *either* of the responsibilities of the Ten magistrates (the 'Cabinet') prescribed above by Menas (5.63), of which the duties of the first seven are now lost; *or*, on the analogy of the division of responsibilities of the second college of optimates described in 5.79ff. of the 'Tens' of the first college. *Dialogue* 5.86, in which Thomas gives the impression that they have been discussing 'Tens' rather than magistrates, may tip the balance to the latter interpretation. However, who is to be responsible for what is less important than Menas' catalogue of issues to be addressed, which have repeated echoes in other C6 literature and in imperial legislation.

73 Mazzucchi's tentative restoration.

74 The translation here, and in much of the immediately succeeding paragraphs, is more than usually tentative.

75 See n. 72.

76 A reference to the (characteristic) ancient Spartan custom of regularly expelling foreigners on such alleged grounds as being a financial burden, corrupting the locals or learning their secrets: see e.g. Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 27.6; Thucydides, *Histories* 2.39; Xenophon, *Constitution of the Spartans* 14.4. Greek history tends to be 'written out' of C6 Byzantine history (e.g. from Malalas' *Chronicle*), in a society which saw itself as primarily *Roman* and in which the very word 'Greek' (*Hellen*) had become a synonym for 'Pagan'. Yet sometimes, as here – and most notably in Justinian's *Institutes* 1.2.10 where Spartan law is claimed, along with Athenian, as a progenitor of Roman law – the debt is acknowledged, while ancient Greek history also surfaces in Agathias, e.g. *Histories* 2.10. The reference here could also reflect contemporary legislation aimed at expelling immigrants, or the supporters of peasant litigants from the capital with the establishment in 539 of a new magistrate, the *quaesitor*, for this purpose (*Just. Nov.* 80).

77 This imprecise target appears to embrace not only political agitators, but also the competitive sporting and theatrical competitions, where strong factional support could generate extreme violence on the part of supporters (as in Constantinople in 512 under Anastasius, when about 3,000 people were killed). They, and the associated sporting factions, were also strongly criticised on moral grounds by late antique church leaders from John Chrysostom onwards: see, for example, his *Against the Games and Theatres*; Jacob of Serug, *Homily* 5; John of

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mation and re-direction of each into civic activities would be the beginning of salvation for the cities.⁷⁸ (5.77) The tenth <Ten>⁷⁹ would administer all immigrants and barbarian deserters, prisoners of war, or those who had become our subjects in other ways in order to serve in the army. (5.78) It is obvious that optimates' wives will help in regard to women's matters particularly since they are the best by nature, the best brought up – and they happen to live with the best people, the optimates! It is fitting for that sex, being both clever and perceptive, to look after their sisters.⁸⁰

(5.79) Of the second century of the optimates,⁸¹ let the first Ten be in charge of arms manufacture, those continuously preparing supplies for wars, and for expenditures in emergencies. (5.80) The second should superintend the farmers and the tax-collectors so that no public taxpayer should pay in respect of that which he does not own nor from what he does not profit, but from whatever may remain after the expenses and necessary requirements of him and his household, according to what the prescribed assessment on his property ordains.⁸² When this principle is not observed, it becomes, apart from the injustice, a cause of ill-will towards the state. (5.81) It is not, in

Ephesus, *Cathedral Homilies* 3. For a contemporary defence of the theatre, see Choricus of Gaza, *Apology for the Mimes*. See also 5.102ff. below.

78 Menas' hope was fulfilled: from the C7 onwards the role of the factions became less overtly political and more ceremonial: Alan Cameron (1976), ch. 9ff.

79 See n. 72.

80 A (weak) reflection of the Platonic idea (*Rep.* 5.456b) that suitable women should also be 'guardians' in his ideal state.

81 See n. 72.

82 Alleged extortionate tax collecting (and imperial greed more generally) was a regular complaint, most virulently expressed in Procopius' *SH* esp. 8, 11 and 19, and John the Lydian, *On Magistracies* 3.68–70. Both are, however, primarily concerned with the impact of the tax regime on the upper classes, by whom it was bitterly resented. See also e.g. Evagrius, *EH* 4.30 for further complaints, plus the widespread peasant hostility to taxes and associated public disorders recorded in reforming legislation in Anatolian provinces (e.g. *Just. Nov.* 24, 25, 27, 29 [all 535], 30, 31 [536]). It is clear from numerous pieces of Justinianic legislation (e.g. *Just. Nov.* 8 and 149), and remissions under Justin II and Tiberius II (e.g. *Just. II Nov.* 1, *Tib. II Nov.* 4), that such accusations of maladministration were not without foundation, even though contemporary critics never seem to have understood the desperate need of the regime for resources – notably, to fight its wars and finance lavish public works, including churches – especially when lands comprising its tax base were under foreign occupation. In *Just. Nov.* 149, Justinian even justifies the benefits taxation brings, notably defence, but also theatres and hot baths! Tax could legally be charged in respect of property from those who did not own it in the case of *adiectio steriliūm* (*CJ* 11.59): that is, when the owner of a property could not be found to pay tax (e.g. he had abandoned the estate as unprofitable), the charge was remitted to the community collectively to which the land was assigned for tax purposes.

fact, unknown that the Romans saw fit to take from the Sicilians a tax of a third of the grain harvest remaining after all expenses had been deducted. But because this wasn't accomplished without hardship, it later became the cause of a revolt.⁸³ (5.82) The third <Ten> should be responsible for agriculture. The fourth should concern themselves diligently with maritime affairs. The fifth with urban trades concerned with all aspects of food supply in the cities, for example: merchants, bakers, retailers, importers and the like, according to their type and the trade of each. (5.83) The sixth with clothing, whether imported or locally produced, and every kind of thing like this. The seventh would deal with construction, including building, carpentry, metalwork, painting and the like. <The eighth> would be responsible for the learned professions; I mean medicine as well as general and elementary education. This group would also be entrusted with conserving and looking after the public library. (5.84) Let the ninth be occupied with the reception, surveillance⁸⁴ and care of ambassadors. Let the tenth look after public buildings, harbours and bridges. (5.85) Those, Thomas, are my views on the ordering of the optimates and their offices. If you agree, say so; if not, object.

Thomas: (5.86) I can't do either, Menas, until we have taken our investigation of the subject to the end. No right-minded person will disagree with the areas of responsibility you have proposed. But I think many of the tasks you have described are more fitting for the magistrates than for optimates. This is especially so in the case of the mechanical trades which, as we see even now, are practised under the supervision of the magistrates. (5.87) Is there not a danger that the magistrates will be untroubled and inactive, deprived of the right to govern, while the optimates, busy with matters that are not strictly necessary, will be kept from matters which are?⁸⁵

83 Diodorus Siculus, *Histories* 34 and 36, for details of major slave revolts in Sicily in c.135–131 BCE and 104–100 BCE respectively. Diodorus, however, offers no corroboration for the *Dialogue's* account of their causes. He attributes them to intense exploitation of the slaves by their masters. In the first at least, the Roman authorities were reluctant to intervene, since the local slave-owning class belonged to the class of 'knights' (*equites*) who made up the courts that might later try governors for provincial maladministration!

84 *Paraphylake*, here translated 'surveillance', could also mean 'safeguarding'.

85 A distinction is drawn here between the optimates and magistrates, even though elsewhere (e.g. 5.63, 79), the latter are to be understood as a subset of the former, with the emperor appointing the highest 'Ten', and they in turn appointing the lower levels (who, however, may not be optimates in the strict sense in the lower reaches, especially if one thinks on an imperial rather than on a city scale: see n. 87 below). The superiority given here and in what follows to the optimates' role is consistent with our author's known sympathies. See Introduction, pp. 66–67, for the possibly wider constitutional implications of this distinction.

Menas: (5.88) You and I don't seem to be aiming at the same target, Thomas; rather, each of us is looking at something different. For I would say that in what we've discussed nothing has been taken away from the responsibilities of the magistrates. Rather the opposite: not only have they been given more work to do, but also better work! (5.89) You seem to imagine, it seems to me, that we have assigned the optimates the same role in the organisation of city and state as those they call in the cities market inspectors and price overseers. (5.90) But I say the optimates should be removed as far, or rather as high, as possible from this: they should only investigate the way of life of each person in the station to which they are assigned, ensure they live temperately, protect them, and, in accordance with both justice and the law, not allowing the more powerful to wrong them – (5.91) in order that, having all experienced the goodwill of the optimates, they may be loyally disposed to them and most easily obey their orders especially in times of need for the state.⁸⁶ (5.92) When this comes about through optimates rather than transient magistrates, it will be more firmly based – and would be logically necessary on other grounds. (5.93) For changes in magistrates notoriously transform and drive out cohesion in the political order and especially the uniformity of ways of life.⁸⁷ (5.94) And besides, who will there be permanently concerned to condemn such developments, except for this order of optimates continually standing watch on everyone's life, constantly doing its job and free

86 'Investigate' translates *Katazeteisthai* (to search out, hold inquiry into). This is a C6 word with strong legal overtones, used in *CJ* 1.3.41.26 and *Just. Nov.* 123.18.1. It gives an inquisitorial flavour to (part of) the optimates' proposed duties. On the other hand, the role of the optimates in protecting the lower orders, especially from ill-treatment from the more powerful, is reflected in the post of *defensor civitatis* whose *raison d'être* was the protection of the poor against oppressive superiors. Under Justinian, an attempt was made to revitalise the post: all residents of substance, however exalted in status (local 'optimates', that is), were obliged to serve in rotation, on the nomination of the bishop, clergy and principal landowners: see esp. *Just. Nov.* 15 (re-enacting a law of 409 establishing the office: *CJ* 1.55.8); Jones (1964), 759. Notable about Menas' proposal, however, is his recognition, once again, of the wider *political* benefits of being seen to protect the lower orders.

87 Part of the difficulty in interpreting the *Dialogue* is that it frequently makes provisions for a world empire, while using an archaising vocabulary and concepts relating to a single city-state. Here the point being made seems to be, at least in part, that if the *local* upper classes establish their legitimate authority in the way described, this will prove in the long run more efficacious in building support for the regime (and themselves) than any governor sent in for a limited period from the capital. It is also, by implication, a criticism of the marked tendency of Roman government from the C4 onwards for imperial officials to perform tasks previously carried out by local councils and magistrates. More generally, this criticism corresponds with the political thrust of the *Dialogue*, which consistently favours the interest of the senatorial classes across the empire against that of the emperor and his servants.

from embarrassment?⁸⁸ (5.95) For these <citizens>, they will secure public order and, he says,⁸⁹ good repute⁹⁰ by representing the danger from these changes which threaten themselves and their children, the living and the dead. (5.96) When this happens, the magistrates will not suffer from these internal upheavals; rather the opposite, they will easily do what is beneficial for the cities, as they govern people who are <now> more prudent. Has my defence not been long enough, or does my speech still lack something?

Thomas: (5.97) I accept that <what you have said> is indeed sufficient. But for that reason, I would like to ask you directly why you have left the one section of the state that most needs government and order both ungoverned and uninvestigated? It is bigger than the other sections and contains more people. Not only that, it is more powerful because it is made up for the most part out of a single group in the prime of life, whose (5.98) good order produces peace and tranquillity, but whose disorder implants a war harder to bear than one from abroad – one that is great, if not much more onerous. (5.99) To put it simply, does not the flower and beauty of the state, as most people say – and, I would add, its strength – rest in bodies? Or is it not above all in the number of people that, for the most part, power lies? Or is it not through a large or limited number of people that a state is, and could be said to be great or small? Of the three components of the state – counsel, people, money – that of the people is recognised either as the most essential or, at any rate, no less important than the other two. (5.100) And it's that which I wanted to say. Why, Menas, have you not thought it fit to mention, even as a last thought, their ordering, their governance, nor any other provision for them – nor, in short, their very name? (5.101) And yet it was all the more necessary in that, in other writers on politics, nothing is recorded on the subject since the problem was not then recognised as something harmful to the cities. But now, it seems, its importance has come to a peak, and we need a remedy and a proper attitude towards it.

88 Notice how the local 'optimates' are, in effect, to place a constraint on the magistrate. More particularly, they are the means whereby the interests of the lower orders, including provincials in an empire-wide context, are protected against them. This is not far – though the language here is more oblique – from the complaints found in Procopius and elsewhere against the activities of imperial governors exploiting provincials on behalf of the emperor as well as in their own interests. Whether local notables can always be trusted to do the right thing is another matter entirely.

89 A literal translation. Behr (1974), 144, suggests that 'he' may be Cicero, and that the passage reflects to some degree the latter's own views. This is not incompatible with what we know of Cicero's views elsewhere, nor of those of our author: cf. n. 86.

90 A possible allusion to Plato, *Meno* 99b–c.

Menas: (5.102) And what would this be, Thomas? You've certainly made a great display of your favourite skill – as an advocate, I mean, or an encomiast! But I think, perhaps, you now want to make a military speech?

Thomas: (5.103) Not about the army that campaigns against our enemies, Menas. But the one that campaigns here at home, amongst us. They don't mention it, but it represents a worse evil wherever it does not meet with great, and firm, authority. (5.104) The pretexts for this civil war, if I may use that expression, are the names of the colours.⁹¹ It seems to me that some evil spirit tosses these in, I don't know how, like the apple thrown to the goddesses in Homer's story.⁹² (5.106) It needs the authorities to take

91 The Blues, Greens and, less prominent, the Reds and Whites: names of the theatre and circus (i.e. chariot-racing) factions who supported particular chariot teams ('colours') from their C5 reorganisation onwards, throughout the Eastern empire. See Alan Cameron (1976); Roueché (1993); Michael Whitby (1999); Liebeschuetz (2001), ch. 6; Bell (2006 and forthcoming). Complaints about the 'factions' (see n. 77) were traditional in upper-class literature. For the C6, see above all *Wars* 1.24–25 and *SH* 7, Evagrius, *EH* 4.32, and Agathias, *Histories* 5.14.4, 5.21.4; and, for the West, Cassiodorus, *Variae* 3.51.3 and 11. They are not wholly unjustified: for major C5/6 disturbances, see – in addition to Procopius – Marcellinus Comes, *a.* 532; Mal., *Chronicle* 235–36 275–81, 288–90, 293–95, 298–307, 389–90; *Chronicon Paschale* 144; Theophanes, *AM* 6094, 6098; John of Nikiu, 164–78. The worst was the Nika riot in Constantinople (532), when the factions, abetted by dissident senators, combined against the regime. This nearly destroyed Justinian and cost about 20,000+ lives after the army had restored order (*Wars* 1.24). There was a recrudescence of serious factional violence towards the end of Justinian's reign from 561 onwards: Mal., *Chronicle* 491ff., Theophanes, *AM* 6054ff.

But our author is also making a veiled political point, not least by ignoring their positive side: the factions, operating empire-wide, provided a focus for personal identity when traditional urban loyalties were breaking down (Liebeschuetz [2001], ch. 6); they also cut across class, political and religious affiliations. On balance, and sometimes it was a very fine balance, they were socially integratory and prevented sedition: see Isidore of Pelusium, *Ep.* 5.185; Mal., *Chronicle* 176–77; Bell (2006 and forthcoming). For most people, chariot races were, like football today, usually just good fun: see, for instance, Corippus, 1.34. However, they were also a political resource for emperors and others, including provincial governors (see e.g. Evagrius, *EH* 6.7), for whom patronage of a faction was important in winning and maintaining popular support: manipulation of the Blues helped secure the throne for Justin I, Justinian's uncle, in 518 (Vasiliev [1950], ch. 1), and later for Justinian (Procopius, see above). Our author is, therefore, also implicitly criticising Justinian's manipulation of the factions, both before and after his accession, in ways that conflict with the *Dialogue's* theory of kingship, and his theories on how legitimate emperors should be selected by the senate and patriarch (see 5.46ff. above). On the significance of this reference for the dating of the *Dialogue* see Introduction, pp. 24–25.

92 *Il.* 24.27–30 recounts how Paris, son of the king of Troy, awarded the prize of an apple to Aphrodite in the contest as to who was the most beautiful of the three rival goddesses, Hera, Athene and Aphrodite. The last had promised Paris Helen, the wife of Menelaus, king of Sparta, as a reward, but the two others were furious. Paris' later abduction of Helen triggered the Trojan War.

very firm control of it by bit and bridle. If not, it does much greater harm to the cities than, as we have just said, war from abroad. For what else is the division of the people into factions, divided against itself and the rest of the city – factions whose venerable names I shall not mention through hatred and shame – but a real, domestic war? (5.107) These sort of people, Menas – I have said it before, I'll say it again, and I won't stop saying it – must be subjected to an authority and to control no less than, or even much greater than others. But why do you groan 'as if', as they say, 'from the depths of your soul',⁹³ like a man outraged?

Menas: (5.108) Because, Thomas, I abhor both the fact and the name <of the factions>. I bellow⁹⁴ at the report and memory of them. And you have brought the whole thing before my eyes like the description of a picture.⁹⁵ (5.109) I was unexpectedly spun round and saw, as in a painting, the cities standing around their mother and queen,⁹⁶ abused by their children and telling each other of the violence and insults they had suffered from within as well as the disasters and losses of cities from outside – I was moved by pity, and could not but groan at their suffering. (5.110) The sound of the words of encouragement directed at them from the sovereign power⁹⁷

93 An apparently proverbial verse, which Mazzucchi (2002) is inclined to attribute ultimately either to Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.485 or 2.288, or even Psalm 129. If so, it could be the only firm biblical reference in the surviving work. MacCoull (2006), 310, points out that the words here, in Greek, are metrical (which suggests a Greek source is the more likely), while the (different) words used in the Psalm serve as the second introductory antiphon of the service of vespers. But it is probably more relevant that the line is cited as a well-known saying, source immaterial.

94 An onomatopoeic word (*mukaomai*), normally applied to oxen, and rare in prose though used both literally and metaphorically by Plato, *Rep.* 3.396b, 10.615e, again echoed.

95 5.109–10: cf. Plato, *Rep.* 7.536c. Menas' observation that Thomas 'has brought ... picture' captures the ancient rhetorical theory of *ekphrasis*, namely a descriptive speech whose goal was to make its subject (in our period largely works of art or buildings) visible, and applicable to the intensely visual imagery in this section of the *Dialogue*, and even more to Paul the Silentiary's *ekphrasis* of Hagia Sophia below. See *ODB* under *ekphrasis* for detail and references.

96 A reference to the capital, Constantinople, often described as the 'Queen of Cities'. This personified image is striking, although the idea of an actual art work depicting cities complaining about what, *pace* the *Dialogue*, was one of the most popular social institutions, is implausible. One recalls, however, the similar personifications of Rome and Constantinople in Paul, *Description* 145–68, with nn. below, as well as in such late antique Latin poets as Claudian and Sidonius Apollinaris. (For the two last and their influence on Paul, see Mary Whitby [1985b]; for personifications of the two cities, Fobelli's commentary on Paul, *Description* 124, with refs.)

97 This sentence is more than usually obscure, and the lacuna hypothesised by Mazzucchi

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seems to me somehow to re-echo, in a twofold way, as in Corybantic⁹⁸ revels, <...>⁹⁹ that the sovereign power herself suffers the same as they, as is clear from her own example. For shared suffering is a great consolation, especially for inferiors, and is in conformity with nature.¹⁰⁰ (5.111) 'Endure', she says,¹⁰¹ 'my children, endure willingly, my daughters, the works of nature. For that creator of all things has, through his great goodness and wisdom, assigned cycles of prosperity and dearth to men with a view to their good order.¹⁰² (5.112) Thus we have gained two things: we have both become close followers of the will of God according to the law of nature; we also bear more easily the reverses of the times. Yet these do not in truth exist – for there is nothing, neither in the universe nor in any part of it, which is contrary to nature – but rather they seem so owing to the imperfections in our understanding and the shortness of life.'

(5.113) However, we have not overlooked, as you thought, the magistracy that deals with this in what we have discussed, even if it happens to be

does not make it any easier. My own *very* tentative translation takes it that a personified Constantinople (as in 5.109) is giving words of encouragement to the cities across the empire afflicted, like her, by the factions. The effect of these words is duplicated (or reinforced) by her own example. Such a personification would fit with the kind of speeches attributed to 'Roma' in Claudian: see n. 96 above.

98 Nature spirits who guarded the young Zeus, and who danced in the orgiastic cults of Dionysus and Cybele. By extension, their human worshippers: Strabo, 10.3.11, Diodorus Siculus, 5.49. The idea of Corybantic frenzy is a favourite image of Plato's, occurring in e.g. *Critias* 54d, *Symposium* 215e, *Ion* 533e, 536e. The precise relevance of this image here is unclear.

99 A brief lacuna here has been hypothesised by Mazzucchi. He had earlier proposed simply adding something on the lines of 'by the law of nature'. He still employs this phrase, however, in his (Italian) translation. See n. 97 above.

100 *Pros physeos akolouthian*, literally 'following nature' – a characteristically Stoic formulation (cf. *SVF* 3.4) and in keeping with the 'philosophical' character of the immediately following passage.

101 The Greek verb has no explicitly gendered subject, but refers back to the power (or city) giving the advice – feminine in Greek. This personification highlights the notably un-Christian character of her exhortation: it does not seek to justify suffering in Christian terms, but in those of (some) later Neoplatonism (e.g. Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries* 1.5), where the source of suffering was viewed not as the creation of the Good, nor of the Soul which ultimately derived from it, but as the failure of a human observer to see the overall pattern. Thus what might seem to finite human intelligence as a disaster, in reality worked to some overarching good. This concept was indebted to Stoic doctrines of universal providence. For an introduction to the Stoics more generally, see Inwood (2003). For the problem of evil amongst Neoplatonists, see Smith (2004), Edwards (2006), Remes (2008).

102 *Phora* (plenty) and *aphoria* (dearth) – a Platonic contrast: *Rep.* 8.546a. Cf. Agapetus, ch. 7 for the transience of human prosperity.

organised differently from what you said. (5.114) You yourself wanted, so it seems, this body of men <, that is, the factions,> to be subordinated to authority and to live temperately by themselves and not to do mischief to the cities. But, as this group cannot live temperately because it has been badly brought up, and especially as it lives in idleness, simply not causing damage will not suffice, I think. Even for a temperate man, it will not be enough: some financial maintenance <will be needed>. And, on top of that ... (5.115) an <har>monious order.¹⁰³

Thomas: That seems true, Menas, and truly fitting for a good <emperor>.¹⁰⁴

Menas: (5.116) Intellect, after observing these most divine visions to the utmost of its ability and having been moulded by them, descends again through the same stages as it rose.¹⁰⁵ (5.117) He will see all these things more clearly than formerly¹⁰⁶ – all the more so, as then he used opinion and

103 The MS disintegrates in the middle of a complex sentence, whose thrust seems to be that more than just effective policing is necessary to control an unruly populace, but also – a very modern idea – good upbringing, education and useful activity are needed if a harmonious social order is to be realised. The production of this is something that the arrangements put forward in the *Dialogue* are intended to achieve. For the idea that idleness leads to crime and general viciousness, see e.g. *On Strategy* 1.1. Unfortunately, we lack details of Menas' scheme. But in the light of the text, when it resumes, it seems he may also have emphasised the necessity of a philosophical understanding and approach to the problem, whose merits are spelt out immediately below.

104 'Emperor' is Mazzucchi's sensible suggestion, doubtless because he considered it would reflect Menas' probable argumentation which is now lost, namely that a good emperor would tackle these underlying social and economic problems.

105 A reference to the Neoplatonic concept of the spiritual ascent of the Intellect (*nous*) from the sensible world to the intelligible Forms and the ultimately unknowable One, which is the source of all Being. On its return, it brings back with it wisdom and enlightenment. This doctrine begins with Plato who argues, in *Rep.* 6 and 7, for an austere abstract process of education in such studies as mathematics, culminating in the comprehension of the Form of the Good – an education that justifies his philosopher-guardians' claim to rule. In parallel, however, in the *Symposium*, Plato stresses, through the mouthpiece of Socrates' alleged mentor 'Diotima', the power of love (*eros*) in turning the soul from the unthinkingness of everyday life to the eternal and impersonal Forms (or Ideas). In the *Phaedrus*, it is the form of Beauty that is the most immediately appealing. Plotinus can combine elements of both approaches (e.g. *Enneads* 6.7.35, 20–28): an intellectual approach, whereby 'Intellect' contemplates things in themselves, namely the archetypes from which it is constituted, which broadly corresponds to Plato's first method; but also a second approach when Intellect goes out of its mind, 'drunk with nectar' (Plotinus cites *Symposium* 203b5), and falls in love with the One. (Cf. Gregory of Nyssa [*PG* 44 992a] who claims God can best be known through a 'sober inebriation'.) These approaches are complementary: Smith (2004), ch. 3; Annas (1981), ch. 8.

106 The reference is unclear but would apply, in principle, to anyone who had undergone

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intelligence as his starting-points,¹⁰⁷ but after his transformation and arrival on high and his illumination by the Divine, he will use the purest light and knowledge. In this way, he will take hold to the maximum extent he can of truth – the resemblance, that is, to the idea of the Good impressed in all things. And, after finally coming to himself from on high, he will reasonably enquire more scientifically who he is, where his place in the world is, and to what class he belongs.

Thomas: (5.118) It would be entirely reasonable to think it right to investigate in this way.

Menas: In his enquiries, Thomas, he will necessarily reason with himself that the first cause of what exists, as it creates everything in accordance with the divine principles inherent in itself, presides over everything and is beyond everything while holding everything inseparable from itself. But, at the same time, by inserting the power of doing good in things through its own providence – just as radii extend from the centre of a circle to the circumference, or, if you wish to put it in a similar way, the rays of the sun <radiate outwards> – the first cause is by these means present in everything and has constituted the primary authorities.¹⁰⁸ (5.119) Thus, in the whole of the intelligible universe, the intelligible sun is the authority, while over the intellectual powers within it, there is an ordering of one over another. In this sensible world, this sensible sun <is the authority> and here one power similarly oversees another. In the case of the elements, the authority is the moon, and once again each element oversees another.¹⁰⁹ (5.120) This being so, it would remain for everything composed of the elements to have an authority in some way analogous to these: for even these, even these are not without a ruler nor unorganised! (5.121) So too, therefore, the human race, when it was shown that each man is composed of a part which commands and another which is commanded,¹¹⁰ so also the state necessarily has an authority similar to that of God in dignity and power. For absolutely nothing exists which does not share in the beneficent operation of the Good. (5.122)

the educational initiation sketched here: an emperor, for instance, or optimate who has been educated in the way specified in the *Dialogue*.

107 Opinion (*doxa*) and intelligence (*dianoia*) are singled out by Plato (e.g. *Rep.* 6.511a; 7.533c) as variously inferior to ‘intellect’ (*nous*), itself perfected by its encounter with ultimate reality, literally ‘that which is’ (*to on*).

108 The idea that the ‘higher’ is always present in the ‘lower’ is fundamental to Neoplatonist thought: Smith (2004), esp. chs. 1–4. See Introduction, pp. 56–57.

109 The reference is presumably to the sub-lunary region: that is, the moon and everything beneath it, including our earth.

110 Possibly, notes Mazzucchi, in a lost book.

What would such authority be if not that of imperial rule alone and of an emperor who resembled, so far as possible, Heaven with the same name and the same power – if, that is, the corruptible can be compared to the incorruptible? But carrying within himself the divine likeness,¹¹¹ and alone standing in a twofold relation to mankind: in one, as a man amongst men; in the other, as an emperor above other men?¹¹²

Thomas: The man who reasoned with himself in this way, Menas, would reason logically.

Menas: (5.123) The philosophical emperor <and> the imperial philosopher who discovered in this way, Thomas, in accordance with Plato,¹¹³ who he was, as we said,¹¹⁴ and where his place was in the world, would reasonably seek to rule to the best of his ability like him whose likeness and image he was.¹¹⁵ If not, he would not truly be emperor, but merely an empty name.

Thomas: It must be so, absolutely.

Menas: (5.124) Do you want us, therefore, Thomas, to start by sketching how someone ruling well and like this would rule, or should we pass over this as sufficiently clear so as not to appear to be over-doing it, and especially so as not to appear immodest in our discussion?¹¹⁶

111 This *could* be a reference to the doctrine of man as an image of God, and thus evidence that the author was a Christian (so Praechter [1900], 629). But, as O'Meara (2003), 59, observes, it is in itself a weak and isolated indication. It is as easily read as another instance in the dialogue of the doctrine noted at n. 108 above. See n. 115 below.

112 Menas' speech sets out, in Neoplatonic style, a 'general theory' of authority and being in the universe, extending down from the One (aka the Good, or 'God') in the highest intellectual realms (which are described, owing to the inadequacy of language, in analogical terms of the sun etc.) down to the governance of the Roman empire. The doctrine of authority is, however, twofold: authority is both exercised downward at all levels of the cosmic hierarchy, but also each ruler is subordinated to his own higher authority. The same message in respect of the ambiguity of the emperor's position is spelt out by Agapetus, e.g. chs. 21, 23, 37, 68.

113 *Rep.* 5.473c–d.

114 cf. 5.117 above.

115 This sentence provides a succinct account of what it is for the emperor to be the imitation of God; for an earlier example, see Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 1.37–47, and Introduction, p. 60, for further Pagan examples of this doctrine of the emperor as the imitation of God, later taken over by Christians such as Eusebius. The detail, in terms of goodness, wisdom, power, providence and justice, is spelled out in 5.129–38 below. The phrase 'image and likeness' may also recall Gen. 1.26, although Plato, *Theaetetus* 176b, talks in terms of the 'assimilation' of man to God, which became the goal of Neoplatonism. Cf. n. 111 above and Introduction, p. 34, which deals with the substantial overlap of philosophical and Christian language. However both here and in n. 112 above, it seems better to concentrate on the essential – the emperor's relationship with God – rather than incidentals that may have a bearing on the author's enigmatic religious affiliations.

116 *Rep.* 6.501a.

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Thomas: (5.125) I certainly wish it, Menas, since until I hear what you have to say, I fear the subject will not be clear enough to me. But if it were possible, it would clearly be more useful to go over such conversations often and many times rather than just speak and listen.¹¹⁷ (5.126) Would it were possible, Menas, to hear these things and things like them said all one's life, and see them carried out – and nothing more!¹¹⁸ (5.127) But if that is not possible, then we should have at least one of the two, namely hearing them. For in this way, one action will benefit whoever practises it in three ways: it would be a deliverance from evil deeds, discourses and sights, while it would involve hearing useful arguments about other matters. If these are not immediately practical, their theory may yet perhaps not seem unreasonable to those who encounter them in future, since this same Muse rules honoured amongst men.¹¹⁹ (5.128) As time goes round, there are fitting opportunities for everything. Do not omit to tell me such things as I will hear with the greatest pleasure.

Menas: (5.129) We have already shown in our earlier discussion that God is good, wise, powerful and just, and that he foresees the future.¹²⁰ In him, these are a unity and equally active; in us, however, they can only be considered separately and are much less capable of being spoken about. (5.130) It is fitting, therefore, for the emperor who wishes to make himself like him, first, being himself good, to do good to those he rules. (5.131) But doing good has, for him, two aspects: the first comes from the character of his soul through his own training in virtue, through imitation rather than through words, and this is, of all things, of the greatest educational value for his subjects. (5.132) The second <derives> from his guardianship of the laws, all the good ordering of the state, about which we've spoken,¹²¹ and his becoming the father of the citizens and much more provident than they in natural things since they are perhaps the fathers of a few, while he is, and is said to be, the father of many. In this he necessarily imitates God, since

¹¹⁷ *Rep.* 2.358d.

¹¹⁸ *Rep.* 5.450b.

¹¹⁹ An allusion to *Rep.* 6.499d, where 'the Muse' (here, effectively, the laws of reason) will guarantee that ideas embodied in the *Rep.* will live on; their time will come.

¹²⁰ In a lost book.

¹²¹ E.g. in 5.17ff., 5.58ff. Preserving the law and imitating divine justice in his own person and actions (5.138) is an imperial role emphasised in the *Prefaces* to Justinian's *CIC*, e.g. *C. Tanta* (533). See Pazdernik (2005), 195, for his analysis of this 'bureaucrat's notion' of a centralised and hierarchical empire: one which overlooks, however, the main beneficiaries of such a dispensation, the senators/optimates. See immediately below.

he is called the father of men and takes thought for them like a father.¹²² (5.133) Put simply, he lives not for himself or in his own interest but for those he rules and in their interest. And, if it is necessary, he will lay down his life for them as has often happened with some rulers, as Codrus died for the Athenians.¹²³

(5.134) In his wisdom, he will have regard for the wisdom of the creator which created what exists, and will imitate this so far as possible by making good arrangements and by continuous concern, both within himself and his entourage, for the magistracies and high policy,¹²⁴ as the creator does with the principles of the universe.¹²⁵ (5.135) But he will no longer be personally involved, of course, with the remoter and subordinate magistracies. Rather, political foresight will flow from him, as from some fountain – and scientifically – to the other magistracies and classes, through the optimates and the other appropriate offices and ranks beneath them, guiding them each to their destination.¹²⁶ (5.136) In this way, imperial providence would not be lacking in the good management of the most important affairs; each citizen would run his own affairs harmoniously, <on the pattern of> a lyre; while the whole polity, moved by all the strings of the harmonious symphony, would

122 Cf. Cicero, *Rep.* 1.35.

123 Codrus was, supposedly, king of Athens in the C11 BCE. During his reign, the Dorians invaded Attica, having been told by the Delphic Oracle that they would conquer if Codrus' life were spared. On hearing this prophecy, Codrus went out, disguised as a woodcutter, and started a fight with some Dorian warriors who killed him; he thereby saved Athens. History records no similar self-sacrifice by a Roman emperor, although, much later, Constantine XI Palaeologus died fighting, according to Byzantine sources, in the defence of Constantinople in 1453: *OCD* under 'Codrus', *ODB* under 'Constantine XI'.

124 A loose translation of, literally, 'the first causes of political affairs'. My translation tries to bring out that it is better for the emperor not to be involved in lower level matters. On which see immediately below.

125 Literally 'with the reasons of things'.

126 At one level, these arrangements are a secular equivalent of Ps. Dionysius' similarly Neoplatonic vision of how the (Christian) God illuminates Heaven and the Church. They are also close to the theory of the emperor found in Agapetus and Paul. Note here, however, how the emperor's authority is mediated through the levels of the secular hierarchies, as is that of God in Ps. Dionysius through the heavenly and ecclesiastical hierarchies. This can also be read as a further plea for the emperor's not becoming involved in detailed administration, as Justinian was to a striking degree, and to which the volume of his legislative activity alone bears witness. Read ideologically, in terms of the political and social implications of this philosophy and its likely beneficiaries, our author is yet again favouring the interests of the upper classes: they would effectively rule, while the emperor reigned on high, and with the state as a whole as one in which everyone knew his or her place. See Introduction, pp. 73–75.

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become both more just and more stable.¹²⁷

(5.137) He will be powerful, first, by trusting in his own virtue; second, by his prudence concerning what needs doing; third, by his boldness in action; fourthly, by his steadfastness in the face of danger; fifthly, and this is the most relevant to politics and brings great power, by the goodwill – and the fear – of those who are ruled.¹²⁸ Of these, one comes through sanctity and hatred of evil; but goodwill through nobility of character¹²⁹ and philanthropy.

(5.138) He is just through the good ordering and functioning in his soul of reason, passion and appetite. From this proceeds, as if from a natural principle, the practice of justice in relation to god and divine matters, while he will also behave fittingly in regard to political matters and in disposing of affairs according to what is right.¹³⁰ This will extend no less to providing for the memory and honour, above all, of the fallen who have died on behalf of the state.¹³¹

(5.139) He is provident through foreseeing and observing beforehand what is likely to happen from the nature of the times and the way matters are moving. (5.140) It would indeed be extraordinary if a farmer can take, as a sign of a good or bad harvest, the early or late sprouting of some crops or plants, and also weather conditions; (5.141) if a herdsman or shepherd can forecast good or bad pasturage from the attacks of wild animals or the leaping or shyness of oxen and sheep; (5.142) if a steersman can predict

127 *Rep.* 3.399c–d for an extended version of this musical metaphor; also Cicero, *Rep.* 2.42. Note here, and in ancient political philosophy generally, the contention that the ideal state is one where social conflict is avoided, and whose elements are in harmony; see Introduction, pp. 69–71 for its ideological significance.

128 Cf. Theophylact Simocatta, *History* 1.19: ‘Let clemency guide anger, but let fear guide prudence’; Agapetus, ch. 35.

129 ‘Nobility etc.’ here translates *kalokagathia*, a contraction of *kalos kai agathos*, literally, ‘fine and good’. The phrase goes back to, at least, Herodotus (1.30) and other C5 BCE writers; it denotes the qualities of a perfect (upper-class) gentleman (with corresponding prejudices). It quickly acquired moral overtones (e.g. Aristotle, *Moralia Minora* 1207b25) that it never shed. Ischomachus might serve as an example of a *kaloskagathos* (a man possessing *kalokagathia*). He features in Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus*, a dialogue nominally on estate management, though with much to say on ‘leadership’.

130 At the core of Plato’s *Rep.* is a twofold conception of justice in which that of the microcosm, the soul, where reason governs both passion/spirit and appetite, is mirrored in the macrocosm, the larger political structure or state. See e.g. *Rep.* 4.433a–c, adopted by Cicero, *Rep.* 2.40–41. The *Dialogue*’s ideal emperor is thus very clearly Plato’s philosopher-ruler.

131 4.71–72 for the importance attached, including for pragmatic reasons, to demonstrating concern for the fallen and military veterans.

storms and calms, stronger and gentler winds from the rising and setting of the stars, and still more from the formations of clouds; or, if you wish, if even animals without reason – of the land, the sea, the air – one after the other have a kind of natural prescience (5.143) – <it would be extraordinary if all this could happen>,¹³² but the steersman of the state has nothing whereby he may foresee the movements and changes of that state!

There is, I think, a double proof of this: one of these is within our power; the other not. (5.144) The wealth and dearth of the times, which are bound to the rotations of the universe, are not in our power.¹³³ But, even though one cannot stop them, the truly political man can foresee and make good provision for them. (5.145) Within our power, however, are justice and injustice, good government and bad government, which represent reverence and contempt for God respectively. (5.146) Know well, my good fellow, that with absolute necessity, the state is bound up with, and conforms to these realities. For, by nature, everything in it will most probably furnish the corresponding expectation – which will be more trustworthy than any prophecy or divine sign.¹³⁴ (5.147) I think it is particularly alien to the great wisdom of an emperor to choose to learn the future from others, as if one chose to trust in the phantasms of a dream rather than that which happened when one was awake. For it would be extraordinary, as Juvenal says,¹³⁵ to seek the same thing outside oneself and not rather within oneself. (5.148) By this means, one would notice with particular ease if the state were about to fall into disorder: the classes of the state would be involved in matters not their own, the priests would be living sacrilegiously,¹³⁶ the optimates would have abandoned their responsibilities, the army would have deserted, other civic groups would be living without fear and for their own pleasure, and

132 My insertion, to clarify a very long and highly rhetorical sentence.

133 Plato, *Rep.* 8.546a. See also 5.111 (and Agapetus, chs. 7 and 11) above for the cyclical nature of prosperity.

134 The argument is obscure. Menas appears to be arguing that a present event or state of affairs will enable one to predict something similar in future. Thus, for instance, just actions will enable one to predict future just actions, good government etc. Proper understanding, in other words, of one's present situation, good or bad, will make it easier to forecast the future.

135 A further reference to a *Latin* author. The most celebrated Roman satirical poet, whose works date from the first half of the C2 CE. Unfortunately, this reference cannot be traced in his surviving works. Another Roman satirical poet of the C1 CE, Persius (*Satires* 1.5–7, or 5.126–31) has, however, been suggested as the source of the citation. But Mazzucchi doubts their relevance. Cf. Agapetus, ch. 3, for the fundamental importance of self-knowledge: 'Know Thyself!'

136 For priestly misbehaviour, see 5.69 above with note.

the imperial power itself – which was the first cause of this malaise – would be taking little notice of it all. (5.149) How would the ruin following such things not be evident in advance when, so it seems, just one of those classes becoming disturbed will cause the dissolution of the remainder – just as, in building, say, if a part happens to be decaying, the rest will decay with it, if someone is not found who will take care of the problem?

(5.150) It would undoubtedly be so, I think. And the answer will be clearer than from an oracle or the examination of fowls or of entrails!¹³⁷ That is why the supreme authority must anticipate such developments and stop their looming up, lest, with the growth of the evil, it becomes hard to put right and <the state> becomes completely separated from justice. (5.151) The words of Cato the Elder are excellent.¹³⁸ When he saw the Romans dismayed in front of the oracles, he said: ‘Why, Citizens, why do we seek answers to our problems from outside ourselves? Look, it is in us ourselves to take one or the other political decision. (5.152) Of the two, therefore, which shall we choose: justice or injustice? If we follow just policies both towards ourselves and towards foreigners, we shall live well. If we are unjust, the opposite will be true. (5.153) If, however, some foreigners choose to wrong our state, and make war whether justly or unjustly, we must work hard to avert conflict with speeches in our defence and by appropriate “massaging”.¹³⁹ If they persist in wishing to wrong us, it is not an oracle that we need, but to march out against them.’ (5.154) According to Homer, ‘the best omen is to fight for one’s native land’.¹⁴⁰ Above all, oracles sometimes

137 This rejection of divination was cited by Prächter (1900), 629, as grounds for denying that the author of the *Dialogue* was a Neoplatonist since divination was, for many later Neoplatonists like Iamblichus and his followers, fundamental. This is implausible. All that is rejected here is using divination in a political context, where political science should be employed. The Neoplatonic influences and allusions elsewhere in the *Dialogue* are overwhelming.

138 M. Porcius Cato, ‘Cato the Elder’ (234–149 BCE), was a dominant figure in the political and literary life of Rome in the first half of the C2 BCE, with some claim to be regarded as the founder of Latin prose literature. The anecdote recounted here does not, however, feature in Cato’s surviving works of which, however, only one, *On Agriculture*, has come down to us entire. Cicero, however, quotes Cato’s joke about the absurdity of divination (*On Divination* 2.51), and again makes fun of it in a letter to Caecina (*To his Friends* 6.6.6–7). Perhaps our author knew these Latin texts.

In Mazzucchi’s editions, the quotation from Cato finishes at the end of 5.152. However, the remaining sentences of 5.153 fit well with Cato’s earlier remarks; I have included them in this quotation accordingly. Thomas also appears to regard all this preceding section as attributable to Cato.

139 ‘Massaging’ translates *therapeiais tais prosekousais*, literally with ‘appropriate medical treatments/therapy’.

140 *Il.* 12.243.

deceive those who consult them, like Croesus, when he heard the oracle: 'Croesus, when he crosses the River Halys, will destroy a great empire'. Loxias is, as you know, another name for Apollo.¹⁴¹

Thomas: (5.155) Cato's precept is truly statesmanlike, Menas, and worth noting.

Menas: It is with these qualities and in this way, I think, Thomas, that the true shepherd of the people¹⁴² should be equipped.

Thomas: (5.156) The man, Menas, equipped in the way we have discussed, would not only be, in my view, emperor. But also, as Pindar put it, 'let him not strive to be God'.¹⁴³

Menas: (5.157) For me, Thomas, the man who had reached such a height of virtue and power would lack something of imperial perfection if he did not himself persuade us by his actions, similar though he be to God amongst men, that he lived rather for those he ruled than for himself – for this is the true and sufficient definition of the man who really is worthy of imperial rule.

Thomas: (5.158) And what would this quality be, Menas, that you wish to rank after the others but, it seems, place above them in terms of worth?

Menas: To choose, Thomas, to provide for the citizens by a reduction in his own dignity – as it seems to many citizens, though it is not so in reality, but an increase in his own glory.

Thomas: (5.159) How will this reduction in dignity – or increase in glory – come about? I do not know what to say before I have heard you.

Menas: I would say that it befits someone who lives not for himself but

141 How Croesus (c.560–546 BCE), the last king of Lydia in Asia Minor, consulted the oracle at Delphi as to whether he should cross the river and attack Cyrus, king of Persia, is found in Herodotus (1.91.4) and Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1407a 39. Croesus took the oracle to mean that, if he did so, *he* would destroy a great empire – that of Cyrus. But the great empire he actually destroyed was his own. Loxias, as Menas rightly points out, is an alternative name for Apollo, especially in his oracle-giving capacity, as at Delphi. Its derivation is uncertain, but may be from *loxos*, meaning 'twisted, crooked, ambiguous': see *LSJ* under *loxos*. There are many similar anecdotes about ambiguous oracles that ensured the Oracle always got it right – to the disadvantage of naïve consultants – and the reference here points up the systematic ambiguity of the oracle tradition.

142 A Homeric echo: Agamemnon is regularly described as 'shepherd of the people': *Il.* 2.243 etc.

143 Pindar, *Olympian Odes* 5.24. Pindar (528–c.446 BCE) enjoyed the widest reputation of Greek lyric poets. He is best known for his choral songs (Odes) composed for the formal celebration of victories in the four Pan-Hellenic athletic contests, including the Olympic Games: as here, a victorious athlete is typically warned, notwithstanding his superhuman achievements, not to aspire to divinity given the risks of divine envy and the psychological dangers of success.

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for those whom he rules not only to put a low value on his own worth for the sake of his subjects but also, if necessary and, as we have already said, on his very life.¹⁴⁴ (5.160)¹⁴⁵ We should remember, Thomas, that this steersman of men is, being a man, subject by nature to two maladies: old age and illnesses. And whichever of them he suffers from, the state will necessarily also suffer along with him. (5.161) Does not Seneca say: ‘Nero is of sound mind – the state is of sound mind; he is out of his mind – and the state with him?’¹⁴⁶ And Livy says: ‘When those in power grow old, the state grows old with them; when they are ill, the state is ill too and matches them in thinking well or badly.’¹⁴⁷ (5.162) Mindful of this, let him by a voluntary decision do one of two things before he reaches the age of sixty: (5.163) either he will put aside political concerns as the greatest of burdens, and on release enjoy the highest honour he did formerly, as well as an adequate public pension covering expenditure of all kinds, while someone else undertakes the imperial government according to the established law. (5.164) Or, if he still holds the tiller of the state in his hands, a helper who will succeed him should be brought in. While he is still alive, the latter will occupy the second place, but after he goes, he will take over the whole direction of the state. (5.165) Relieved of the burdens of politics, he will probably impose on himself the tasks of education, leading the citizens towards arguments promoting courage, and implanting in them the love of their state. (5.166) Thus, in truth, he who while a man lives ‘esteemed by the people as a God’,¹⁴⁸ will leave, on his death, here amongst men an immortal memory and the greatest reputation, and, on departing to the regions of the Blest, will inherit a happy fate.

Thomas: (5.167) It is reasonable that such a man should meet with such a fate and memory. But at what age should he choose one of these alternatives?

144 See 5.133.

145 For 5.160–61, cf. Plato, *Rep.* 5.462d–e.

146 L. Annaeus Seneca (c.4 BCE/1 CE–65 CE), a figure of great and enduring literary and cultural significance. Seneca was a Stoic philosopher, writer, tutor, and later senior adviser to the emperor Nero. Forced by Nero to commit suicide, he explicitly imitated Socrates (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.62–64). This quotation does not survive in Seneca’s surviving works. Mazzucchi offers two comparable passages, however, from the *Octavia* (429–34, 575–83), a political tragedy about the wife of Nero, attributed to Seneca, although he is almost certainly not the author.

147 Titus Livius (Livy) (59 BCE–17 CE). The quotation is not in the surviving books of his *Histories*. However, Mazzucchi offers Livy, *Histories* 6.23.7 and Cicero, *Rep.* 1.31 for comparison.

148 *Il.* 11.58 and elsewhere.

Menas: Let's say, if you're content, Thomas, fifty-seven.¹⁴⁹

Thomas: (5.168) That too seems to me splendid, Menas. And, if it happened, it would be very easy and desirable both for he who did it and beneficial for the community; if it did not, it would be the opposite for both.

Menas: (5.169) Would we not, therefore, be rightly confident that such a man would enthusiastically accept this proposal and even compel those who were unwilling, the optimates perhaps and the other citizens, to accept it as he strove for the advantage of the state both as a young man and especially as he reached old age?

Thomas: (5.170) Not only confident, Menas, but we must be powerfully persuaded that it should be so. For how could he not be enthusiastic about this when he has chosen to live not for himself but for the citizens?

Menas: (5.171) Let this law, therefore, Thomas, be added to those already laid down concerning the imperial office.

Thomas: Absolutely. But, Menas, why alone of living creatures has

149 Cf. Plato, *Rep.* 9.572d. Problems of securing a peaceful succession in autocratic regimes, especially where, as in Rome, there was no firm hereditary principle, are real. (See Introduction, p. 21, and n. 58 above). They bedevilled the Roman Empire throughout its history. It was sensible, therefore, for our author to address them. Around the time of the *Dialogue*, Anastasius (r. 491–518) had died aged about 80, and his last years had been marred by breakdowns in public order in the capital, notably in 512, and a full-scale rebellion, not fully suppressed at his death in 518. (See e.g. Mal., *Chronicle* 402–08; Marcellinus Comes, *s.a.* 514–18; Evagrius, *EH* 3.43; Theophanes, *AM* 6005–10.) The choice of his successor, Justin I, was contested and violent, although Justinian, his nephew, was adopted as Justin's successor, albeit only very shortly before the latter's death, thereby ensuring a peaceful transition. Justin II (r. 565–78) succeeded his uncle following a peaceful coup, on Justinian's death, involving members of the court aristocracy and the patriarch. He later went mad (574), and was eventually peacefully succeeded in 578 by Tiberius II.

But if the *Dialogue* rightly argues for more systematic arrangements, and also for guarding against the perils of a possibly senile emperor, the age-limits proposed are potentially controversial. If the *Dialogue* was written early in Justinian's reign – he was about 45 when he became emperor – then the argument about possible retirement dates represents speculation about the relatively distant future and is to that extent anodyne. If late in his reign, on the other hand, as seems more probable, then the argument is critical of the ruling emperor: Justinian was 57 in c.539. But he went on to rule until 565, when he was about 83, with no designated successor. By then, the activism that characterised his earlier years had largely ceased; he was preoccupied with religious matters; faction rioting was again a problem; there were several conspiracies against him in his last years, while, along with other disasters, the Kotrigur Huns nearly took Constantinople in 559. In the same year, there was a panic started by the rumour that Justinian was dead: Mal., *Chronicle* 490ff, Theophanes, *AM* 6053. The need for a replacement and/or a clearly designated successor may have been, therefore, of general concern. Like MacCoull (2006), 309, I agree that this section is critical of the emperor. See below for Paul the Silentiary's efforts to present these last grim years of Justinian's reign favourably.

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man drawn as his portion such distractions and disturbances that he needs external help for such great reversals of fortune?

Menas: (5.172) We've already dealt with this, albeit briefly, in our earlier discussion.¹⁵⁰ However, since you wish it, we'll talk about it again in more detail. (5.173) The creator of all things, as you know, constructed the universe through his own goodness.¹⁵¹ He distinguished the forms of things with regard to the good order of the whole, and, after binding them together with the bonds of peace, he blended them harmoniously through his divine art. (5.174) He implanted in them the love of the Divine¹⁵² so as to attach them to the one principle of universal reason: equally and justly – in respect of transcendental concepts; unequally – in respect of the value of each thing, and all with a view to universal harmony.¹⁵³ He deliberately and firmly placed next to each thing the corresponding Idea – out of which eternal principles, as if from a primal spring, continuously pour, uncontaminated, a cohesive and controlling force.¹⁵⁴ (5.175) After arranging

150 5.118–21.

151 Again, *demiourgos* for creator. This is standard Platonic usage. Although not taboo for Christians, the biblical term would be *krites*. So the usage here is definitely classicising, if not actually 'Pagan'.

152 This is 'divine love' not in a Christian, but in the Aristotelian sense (*Metaphysics* 11.1071b 12–26) of love *for* the divine. Here the love of god is characterised passively, as moving the universe 'not as a lover moves, but as the beloved is moved': everything that is, is moved, as a lover is by his/her beloved. Cf. n. 105 where 'Intellect' is described as 'falling in love with the One'. (The doctrine was, however, appropriated by Christians: cf. the final verse of Dante's *Divine Comedy*: '... the love that moves the sun and the other stars' [*Paradise*, Canto 33]). More particularly here, all creation aspires to the one principle of universal order which is its ultimate goal or end (*telos*). Note the use here, as in Aristotle, of the Greek word for love, *eros*, which applies primarily to erotic love, not the blander word, *agape*, which denotes 'love' in the NT. (In Agapetus, it is *philanthropia* that has largely replaced *agape*: see Agapetus n. 34.)

153 The thought here is that general ideas, concepts etc. are universal; they belong to the intellectual realm. In principle at least, they are accessible to all (cf. the concepts of mathematics). On the other hand, the value of the things making up the world, e.g. inanimate objects, 'lower' animals, and men, is not equal. But all co-exist, as Menas goes on to demonstrate, in a harmonious universe.

154 The word 'Idea' (of which 'Form' is a synonym) is here used in a technical Platonic sense, as the ultimately real, eternal universal standing behind each particular (as the 'Idea of the Dog' underpins the existence of any particular dog). For Menas, such Ideas, in effect, govern the perceptible world we live in. Some scholars have seen an allusion here to the metaphysics of Ps. Dionysius the Areopagite (*On the Divine Names* 4.4), although a separate, common source for each seems more likely. Nevertheless, the metaphysics of the *Dialogue* closely reflect, though avoiding specifically Christian language, Ps. Dionysius' hierarchical and Neoplatonic ordering of the universe, with God as the first principle pouring illumination down to the lower levels of reality. See nn. 65 and 126 for Ps. Dionysius.

things thus, with the first as first, the second as second, the third as third and so on, and having eternally ordained that everything should always proceed according to its own principle and ranking, moving according to its own will, he allowed nature to transform herself through mutations and in this way to renew herself after adorning her with ageless and permanent privileges.¹⁵⁵ (5.176) Of these entities, the human race occupies a middle place in our universe with something in common with both rational and irrational nature. From this comes our understanding that those above and below it are at peace since they are non-composite entities, with no incentive within themselves for conflict against each other: the higher are filled with the purest reason and intellect and derive from the divine life; the others are set in their place by nature. (5.177) Only man, who is caught in the middle by both forces, contains disturbances within himself as well as wars arising both from inside and those imported from outside. (5.178) This is because he is made up of this combination of diverse and heterogeneous elements, with one group in him striving for things on high, but the other clinging to things below. For it is by nature that those that lie in the middle of different elements are both attracted to, and repelled by each. It is from this that all disturbance in souls results.

(5.179)¹⁵⁶ Divine providence, through its great bounty, has accordingly not allowed this predicament to go unprovided for: it has assigned to us, as well as other things, the two first and best aids for human reason, dialectical and political science, by which kindred elements can be reconciled in unity. (5.180) Of these, it specially assigned the incorporeal to our incorporeal reason, and political knowledge to corporeal beings, in so far as they concern themselves with political activities. (5.181) Dialectical science was given first in time to raise us to divine things <...> and political science second, although the latter has primacy in terms of efficacy and esteem, since <it is> an end, whereas dialectical philosophy <exists> *for* an end.¹⁵⁷

155 A serious problem for Platonic metaphysics, based on eternal and unchanging 'Ideas (or Forms)', is how to account for the change we see in this world. This sentence 'solves' the problem rhetorically rather than philosophically.

156 For 5.179–81 cf. Plato, *Rep.* 7.532–33, 534e.

157 Mazzucchi (ed. 2002) detects a lacuna in this sentence, and the doctrine expressed is surprising: cf. O'Meara (2002), 52. It runs contrary to the standard Platonic position (*Rep.* 7.534e) that 'dialectic' is the 'coping-stone' (*thrigkos*) of all learning and 'no other study deserves to be put above it'. It also runs contrary to the author's own, 'orthodox' position in 5.194 below. This represents 'political knowledge' as a means of regaining our spiritual motherland – rather than as something cultivated for its own sake. So something seems to have gone wrong here with the text and/or the argument. Perhaps, however, the argument is merely

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Thomas: (5.182) Why, therefore, Menas, can't we say the same about philosophy without qualification and about the philosophy of one man – and believe it correctly?

Menas: (5.183) It seems you forget, my friend, something else we have discussed:¹⁵⁸ namely, that this could be said and said truly in the case of a single man, in so far as he was a philosopher, but could not <be said> in the case of the salvation of a whole city or a state. (5.184). But our enquiry is about the salvation of many, I think. What else than this does political science seek? For instance, a doctor who established himself in one city and who only treated himself but none of the other citizens would rightly not even be called a doctor.

Thomas: (5.185) However, since I've some difficulties with this, although I've been listening quietly, Menas, could you please resolve the point at issue? It would be out of place to keep silent voluntarily when one thinks what has been said is inadequate.

Menas: What do you have in mind, Thomas? Speak out.

Thomas: (5.186) I mean that, as you yourself say and I agree with you, that the perfect and blessed life is one in so far as it is the imitation of God; that the imitation of God is recognised as benefiting men so far as this is achievable; and that benefiting men is seen most especially in establishing a just city and state. (5.187) It has been shown that this cannot happen without political knowledge.¹⁵⁹ It is, therefore, necessary that a statesman,¹⁶⁰ in order to benefit the population, either makes all the citizens – or at least most of them – such as he is, which I think impossible. Or, failing that, the public benefit will be less.

Menas: (5.188) If, Thomas, a statesman were to claim this – to make all the citizens like him – then I would admit you are right. But since things are different from this, you will realise that, as the saying goes, you have strayed from the path.¹⁶¹ (5.189) For political science, and the man who is equal to it, claims to make a just and harmonious city not in a single way, but by benefiting and saving all the citizens, not by making them all such

over-compressed. For if we take 'dialectic' in its more modest sense of correct reasoning and as a necessary condition of effective reasoning in other spheres, then it is not an 'end' like political philosophy, but merely a tool to that end. See Plato, *Philebus* 54c, for his terminology of 'means' and 'ends'.

158 In another lost book. But cf. Plato, *Rep.* 7.519e.

159 5.179–81 above.

160 I.e. the man with philosophically based political understanding, ultimately the emperor.

161 No such maxim appears known, but Mazzucchi notes the metaphor of losing one's way in *Rep.* 4.420b.

as he is. (5.190) He will save some, who are naturally receptive, by the sharing of political science, others by <inducing> correct opinion, others by the imparting of trust, others by habituation to a just life, others by fear of the state laws, and others through the imitation of domestic well-being. (5.191) The image of those who live according to science¹⁶² is of those who love to see and travel in the light; others are like blind men who, in their ignorance, nevertheless themselves follow the right road.¹⁶³ Yet all are driven to a unique salvation, albeit one different for each person. (5.192) For universal reason and law have ordained that the lot of each is determined thus and that people differ from each other in knowledge and other virtues, and also in the quality of their nature.

Thomas: (5.193) I accept that your reasoning is impeccable and I agree with you wholeheartedly.

Menas: So, Thomas, shall we form an opinion something like this about political science? (5.194) How God, in his great goodness, took thought for the far settlement of the race of men that he had ordained after sending them from their country on high as colonists to this place in the universe? He devised a divine method for the sake of the good order of those who are here – I mean political knowledge – by means of which, through the ordained revolutions of time, they could recover their mother-city above, which is worthy of the immortal state.¹⁶⁴ Or how does this seem to you?

162 'Science', as understood in the Platonic tradition, in contrast to the narrower English sense, which tends to associate it with the natural sciences and people in white coats in laboratories. Cf. the similarly wider application of German *Wissenschaft*, or French *science*.

163 For the distinction between knowledge/science (*episteme*) and right opinion (*orthodoxa*), see Introduction, p. 55 above. MacCoull (2006), 309, sees 'walking in the light' as an allusion to 1 John 1.7; John 11.9–20, 12.35; Rev. 21.24. She concedes, however, that our author uses a different word for walk (*badizein*), not the NT *peripatein*. See on this Introduction, p. 77.

164 The metaphor here is that of a mother-city (*metropolis*) sending out its colonies (*apoikiai*), a common practice of mainland Greek cities in the C8–6 BCE: Naples, Marseilles, Syracuse and Byzantium are amongst the better known. God's motive, on this interpretation, is not a punitive expulsion of man from his 'country above' (*tes ano patridos*), although it can seem like exile, but rather a more encouraging explanation of our presence here in terms of God's seeking to ensure that there are intelligent beings at all levels of the universe. But he then helps them find their way back – *via* political philosophy. This is a significant difference from the Judaeo-Christian tradition of God's penal expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden (Genesis 3). MacCoull (2006), 306, nevertheless claims to detect Christian echoes here: in Gal. 4.26, referring to the city, not made of hands, which is above, and also to Heb. 13.14, describing it as not the passing one here, but the abiding one to come. However, the contexts from which the NT examples are taken are very different. More important, as O'Meara explains (2002, 53; 2003, 176), the image here has a long pedigree, going back to Plato himself, in terms of the model 'in heaven' on which our earthly state is based and where we wish to return – a city described by

Thomas: (5.195) How could I wish not to hold such an opinion about so large a matter, and which has been shown to be of the greatest importance for mankind?¹⁶⁵

Menas: (5.196) Let it be so. I think, Thomas, that our discussion has sufficiently shown what you wanted to learn¹⁶⁶ and what a good emperor would be like, who carried within himself the image of God, and how, through imitating the Divine, he would organise the state.

Thomas: Yes, completely.

Menas: (5.197) But I don't think it would be absurd to examine more precisely the question of the imitation of God so that we may obtain a well-defined opinion concerning it.

Thomas: I would respond that it would be utterly absurd, Menas, if we omitted anything that was capable of leading to it.

Menas: (5.198) Reason will in no way hesitate to assert, Thomas, that the imitation of God comes to those to whom it comes through the goodness of God over and beyond the nature of those who are so benefited. Or how does it seem to you?

Thomas: In no other way than this, Menas.

Menas: (5.199) We can be firmly confident that similarity with the universe is innate in human nature.¹⁶⁷ That the relationship is one of greater to lesser, as we have said,¹⁶⁸ or child to parent, or to put it simply, of creator to created.¹⁶⁹

Thomas: (5.200) Absolutely. Each is benefited equally according to his worth.

Menas: Has what we said earlier in a simple way and through analogies,¹⁷⁰ not now been demonstrated by argument to be so necessarily?

Thomas: What are you saying?

Proclus as 'the intelligible city': see *Rep.* 6.500e3; 9.592b; Proclus, *On Timaeus*, 1.32.11–19. Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6.8, reads Odysseus' return to his home island of Ithaca in similar terms as the return of the soul to the One; the last Pagan emperor, Julian (r. 361–63), also represents the human condition as one of 'exile' from which we try to return: *Or.* 3.30.90; 8.9.169b–c.

¹⁶⁵ Possibly 5.181.

¹⁶⁶ 5.125–26.

¹⁶⁷ A reflection of the Neoplatonic commonplace that the lower is not simply a copy of the higher, but that the higher persists in the lower: Smith (2004), esp. chs. 1–4.

¹⁶⁸ Not in any surviving book.

¹⁶⁹ Literally 'of creation to creation' which may be better interpreted as a play on the double meaning of 'creation' (*demiourgia*): '(act of) creation' and 'created object, handiwork'.

¹⁷⁰ Again, in a lost part of the work.

Menas: That the truly imperial man is moved in sympathy with heaven and the universe.

Thomas: Obviously. What is similar absolutely is necessarily similar universally.¹⁷¹

Menas: (5.201) Does it not, therefore, Thomas, seem to you that what was added to the prayers of Socrates was not produced under compulsion nor again involuntarily, but rather through a natural and spontaneous movement?

Thomas: What?

Menas: (5.202) 'May you lead me', he says, 'O Zeus, and you, O Destiny, wherever I am commanded by you, that I shall follow you with zeal; and if I become wicked and do not wish to, that I shall follow you no less.'¹⁷²

Thomas: So be it.

Menas: (5.203) He will not, therefore, be disturbed at all by any human affairs, but living rather with happiness as his companion, as at a festival, he will live in this life well prepared for his transfer from here. He will not give his body any thought, but long rather for his separation and the future requital of his hopes.

Thomas: And very reasonably, given that while in the body he already lived, with all his mind and understanding, as a citizen of there rather than amongst men.

Menas: (5.204) These are the tokens, therefore, in which imperial science differs from layman's knowledge.¹⁷³

171 An obscure way of making the claim that what is absolutely true is also universally true: if it is always true that A is B, then it follows that all As are B. In this case, if all beings reflect in their nature the nature of the universe, albeit in varying degrees, then the emperor will do so also – in his case, of course, to an exceptional degree.

172 This appears to be a mistaken attribution to Socrates of a prayer by Cleanthes the Stoic (331–242 BCE) fr. 2, best known for his (now fragmentary) *Hymn to Zeus*, cited by the C2 Stoic philosopher, Epictetus, *Encheiridion* 53.1. The *Dialogue's* version also differs in numerous respects from other known versions; see Behr (1974), 146, for details.

173 These remarks seem implausible until one recalls especially Justinian's later years. *SH* 13.28–33 and *Bldgs.* 1.7, 7–8, both note his asceticism, the former unfavourably. Corippus similarly describes how the elderly Justinian 'burnt with the love of eternal life', although he is no less clear that 'the old man no longer cared ... and many things were too much neglected': Corippus, 2.260ff. His later behaviour corresponds more closely to the author's view of the desirable limits of imperial activity (see 5.58ff.) than to Justinian's greater earlier activism, not least as measured in terms of legislative volume or military expansionism. On the other hand, it sits uncomfortably with our author's views on the early retirement of emperors and the need for a successor to be identified: see n. 149 above.

Thomas: They are indeed most divine, and I have not heard them before!

Menas: (5.205) I think, Thomas, what we were able to say earlier about imperial rule, as raised above all intelligence, was based rather on conjecture than on truth. But now, after we have been lead by the hand of reason, it has been revealed to us – so far as this is possible – as the truth.¹⁷⁴

Thomas: Exactly so.

Menas: (5.206) It is, I think, Thomas, true of each subject: concerning both good imperial rule and the man like it.¹⁷⁵ It has been most clearly demonstrated that, amongst men, the first good is political science in so far as it represents the imitation of the Good, and that of other occupations, nothing more exalted nor equal to it can be found.

Thomas: I agree.

Menas: (5.207) You would agree with greater enthusiasm, Thomas, if you recalled those who concur with you on this. In fact, one's own opinion, when it is confirmed by the authority of a better person, becomes generally acceptable.

Thomas: Who do you mean?

Menas: (5.208) Socrates and his circle and those who flowed out from him, like rivers from the Ocean,¹⁷⁶ men who were divine in virtue and culture, and the illumination not just of Greece, but of all the world – men like Plato and Xenophon <and> Aristotle and the rest of the company of philosophers.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Cf. 5.5, 5.8. In other words, our interlocutors believe they have answered the (difficult) questions they originally set themselves.

¹⁷⁵ Plato, *Rep.* 8.543c–d; here, 5.17.

¹⁷⁶ *Il.* 21.195–97. The metaphor of water flowing recalls, surely not coincidentally, the Neoplatonic commonplace of Intellect, Soul and, in effect, everything streaming down from the One – and here, by analogy, wisdom etc. from Socrates and his followers. The idea that rivers flow from, not into, the Ocean is nevertheless odd.

¹⁷⁷ Plato (c.429–347 BCE), the most prominent 'pupil' of Socrates and the ultimate inspiration of this *Dialogue*; Aristotle (384–322 BCE); and Xenophon (c.430–d. after 371 BCE), not now primarily remembered as a philosopher, although he wrote a number of extant Socratic dialogues (see 5.211 below), other works on history and political affairs, and, via his *Cyropaedia*, may also be the source of the *Dialogue*'s references to Cyrus (see 4.3 with nn. above). This is an interesting selection, if only because confined to classical C5/4 BCE Athens, and to Platonists – although Aristotle later broke with Plato's successors to found his own school in Athens, the Lyceum (c.335 BCE). However, one of the major trends in philosophy in late antiquity was to demonstrate that the thought of Aristotle and Plato were essentially compatible. There are also a few signs of Aristotelian influence in the surviving parts of the *Dialogue*: see those suggested by Mazzucchi, *Index auctorum*, 159. But notwithstanding Menas' earlier insistence on not basing conclusions on one man or state (5.63), the author of the *Dialogue* has not made use of the kind of erudition and the empirical approach that characterises Aristotle's own *Politics*. Later Greek philosophers of other schools, notably Stoics, Epicu-

(5.209) Cicero was right to name Socrates as ‘leader’¹⁷⁸ and, to express myself willingly in Latin, called him *princeps*¹⁷⁹ of all true philosophy. (5.210) Of these thinkers, Plato said that neither the Republic which he had sketched nor any other could emerge, nor could the whole human race find salvation unless the various natures that now pursue them by different means are debarred from so doing, so that philosophy and political power come together.¹⁸⁰ (5.211) Xenophon testifies to this in his recollections of Socrates: ‘Glaucón,’ he said, ‘have you thought about who should preside over our city?’ ‘I have,’ he replied. ‘By Zeus,’ he said, ‘if anything is fine in human affairs, it is that subject.’¹⁸¹ (5.212) And again: ‘I don’t suppose, Euthydemus, that you are aiming for that virtue whereby men become statesmanlike and skilled in public and domestic management and suitable for government and helpful both to other men and to themselves?’ ‘I am greatly lacking, Socrates,’ he said, ‘in this virtue.’ ‘By Zeus,’ said Socrates, ‘You are aiming for the most beautiful and greatest skill. For it is that of kings and is called “royal”.’¹⁸²

Thomas: (5.213) These men are fully sufficient to guarantee the truth of whatever they say, even if the arguments are lacking. And what they have said is sufficient also for the glory of political science.

Menas: (5.214) I think, however, that it is not unreasonable that we have confirmed our views – as if we were afraid of our own reasoning – first, by means of correct opinion, second, through reasoning and truth, and third, through the testimonies of these men.

Thomas: Yes, most reasonably.

Menas: (5.215) We have exalted the imperial office to such a height through our discourse and established its own intrinsic importance, that one

reans and Sceptics, are conspicuously absent. So too are later Platonists, including Plotinus. Note also the intellectual archaism: all the figures cited as exemplars lived some 900 years before the *Dialogue* was written! (Cicero, not mentioned here, lived a mere 600 years earlier.)

178 Cicero, *On the Orator* 3.16, describes Socrates as ‘easily the leader’ of a number of Athenian intellectuals in respect of a wide range of literary competences, though Mai suspected a similar accolade in a now lost portion of his *Rep.* Pace Behr (1974), 147, *On the Orator* is fuller and more accurate than other references to Socrates in Cicero’s *Rep.*, 2.1.3 and 2.11.22.

179 *Princeps*, the word Menas employs, is a Latin translation of the Greek word *arkhegos*, rendered here as ‘leader’, from which the English ‘prince’ derives. For the continuing widespread use of Latin in Justinian’s reign and later, see Introduction, n. 181 above.

180 *Rep.* 5.473d–e.

181 Xenophon’s recollections of Socrates, known by their Latin title of *Memorabilia*, comprise a collection of four conversations reporting, very favourably, aspects of Socrates’ thought and activity. How much represents Xenophon’s, as opposed to Socrates’, views is debatable. The quotation is from *Memorabilia* 3.6.2.

182 *Memorabilia* 4.2.11

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may very easily discern, by comparison, the sickness of men – and not of them alone, but what brings sickness to the state.

Thomas: What are you saying?

Menas: (5.216) If you told one of your men, Thomas, to graze sheep, say, or goats in the countryside, but he hadn't first learnt the art of shepherding and had no experience of it, how do think he would reply?¹⁸³

Thomas: What else than that he wasn't able to do what he hadn't been trained to do?

Menas: (5.217) Would not one think the same, Thomas, in the case of the other professions – medicine, say, or architecture or metalwork and the like – and indeed in the case of the so called 'frivolous professions', like playing the flute or dancing and such like?

Thomas: Absolutely true.

Menas: Come now; let us go over to political science.

Thomas: What in particular?

Menas: (5.218) You know, Thomas, that most men – I don't say 'all' lest I seem to exaggerate – have not yet acquired any appearance of political learning; they leap into political posts and even into the imperial office itself.¹⁸⁴ They purchase these with money, flattery and soliciting by night and by day, and employ other means of enchantment to this end, as if they had already <practised polit>ical <science>!¹⁸⁵ (5.219) Whenever such circumstances prevail, they must offer themselves for public service at the summons and under the compulsion of the citizens (5.220).¹⁸⁶ And were you to ask if they were competent for the task, they would respond 'Absolutely!'

Thomas: (5.221) It is not only me, Menas, who observes this all the time, although it is the saddest thing, but everyone who has even a little perception.

Menas: (5.222) This, Thomas, this I say is the worst sickness, the mother and nurse of all political evil. For evil men not to be shamed is the worst of all sicknesses ...¹⁸⁷

183 Plato, *Rep.* 1.332c, 7.526a.

184 This section echoes *Rep.* 6.495d.

185 The preceding phrase remains uncertain: Mazzucchi's original inclination appears to have been to leave a lacuna. However, the broad sense of this paragraph (and phrase) is clear enough, not least through comparison with the 'original' cited immediately above: unqualified people are rushing into professions for which they lack qualifications. In the *Rep.*, it is philosophy; here, it seems to be politics into which the unqualified rush.

186 The grammar of these two sentences is obscure, and my translation once again tentative, though it reflects that of Mazzucchi.

187 Here the MS finally breaks off.

PAUL THE SILENTIARY

DESCRIPTION OF THE CHURCH OF HAGIA SOPHIA

Iambics addressed to the Emperor Justinian¹

Is it possible to find a day greater than today, on which both God and Emperor are honoured?² It is impossible to name one. We know that Christ is Master; yes, we know it absolutely. For you make this known by your words, (5)³ Mightiest One, even to barbarians.⁴ From this, you have Him to hand as a collaborator⁵ in your deeds: in making laws, founding cities, raising temples,⁶ taking up arms (should the need arise), arranging truces and checking conflicts. (10) From this, victory is inherent in your labours like an emblem.⁷ (Is it not true that, to the West, we must traverse the whole earth and come to the Ocean, to find the boundary of your power? While to the East, do you not now make all men yours? (15) Some you routed in

1 This and later *lemmata* (or headings) belong to the MS tradition. They go back, therefore, to at least the C10, the date of Paul's MS.

2 For dating, see Introduction, p. 17.

3 This and subsequent numbers in brackets denote line numbers.

4 4–16: that is, by spreading belief in Him, Christ in turn gives the emperor victory, as his empire bears witness. (Cf. *Bldgs.* 1.2.11, where the cross on the orb carried by Justinian on his equestrian statue outside the Augusteum, near the palace, is described as 'the emblem by which alone he has obtained both his empire and his victory in war'.) Neither here nor elsewhere, however, does Paul claim, as did *Bldgs.* 1.9, that Justinian had engineered religious unity. By 562/3, this claim was radically implausible. Even in 554–55, a date often suggested for the *Bldgs.*, it was disputable. For the church-historical background, see Rompay (2005) and Sotinel (2005); for the dating of the *Bldgs.*, Introduction, p. 92.

5 Note how God is portrayed as a 'colleague' or 'collaborator' (*sunergon*) of Justinian. See Introduction, p. 7.

6 I.e. building churches. Note the use of the classicising word 'temple' for 'church', an archaism characteristic of the period, also found in Procopius and the *Dialogue* (5.19), who similarly describe bishops as 'high priests': Averil Cameron (1970), ch. 8.

7 The verb *nikao* (conquer, defeat) in its various forms (here, *to nikan*, translated 'victory') is used six times in the first 100 lines. This is unlikely to be, as Fobelli suggested n. *ad loc.*, an attempt to exorcise the memory of the ruinous riot in 532, known as the 'Nika' ('Conquer!') after the chant of the participants, some 30 years earlier. More probably, it simply reflects the triumphalist rhetoric applied to Justinian throughout this poem.

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battle; others before it came to a clash; and have you not long since held every Libyan in slavery?⁸) From this, against all expectation, you escape serenely from diseases. (20) From this, as one would expect, you always pass by hidden dangers with knowledge, Almightyest, protected not by spears or shields, but by the very hand of God.⁹

I admire you, Almighty One, for your good courage. I admire you for your judgement and your faith. The ambush was laid, (25) the sword was at the ready, the appointed day had come. The conspirators had already passed into the palace and were grasping the inner door. Next, they intended to dash against your throne. But you realised this and had known long since. (30) So you remained steadfast and had faith in Him alone who is your champion – I mean God – through whom you are victorious in all things. And you did not fail in your objective.¹⁰ For what followed? The leader of the ambush fell by his own hand, (35) for Justice was not willing to preserve him:¹¹ she knew

8 A panegyric summary of Justinian's achievements, echoed in e.g. the *Prefaces* in the *Corpus of Civil Law* (completed in 534), and *Bldgs.* (1.15–20 for religious, military and legal accomplishments; the remaining text for buildings, new cities and charitable works). 'Libya' (effectively, Tripolitania, Tunisia and eastern Algeria) is singled out because it represented the first brilliant step (533) in Justinian's reconquest of former Roman territories in the W. Mediterranean, which Justinian milked for its propaganda value throughout his reign. 'Ocean' is a conventional term for the western extremity of civilisation; it might also hint at Justinian's recent re-establishment of a foothold in southern Spain (Baetica) in 552: see Pohl (2005). See also n. 53 below for more detail on the Justinianic empire, and also Introduction, pp. 1–8 and 94.

9 Note the continuing emphasis on the divine protection that the emperor enjoys. Justinian had survived the plague in the 540s, after reports of his death (*SH* 4.1). *Bldgs.* 1.7 also records another illness of the emperor, caused by religious austerities and appropriately cured by the application of a reliquary. More recently, in September 560, there had been another panic in the capital over a report of the emperor's death (Theophanes, *AM* 6053). Such uncertainties about the health of Justinian, now about 81, and the absence of any clear successor help explain anxieties on the need to clarify and secure the imperial succession reflected in the *Dialogue* (see 5.160ff. above). Cf. Corippus, 3.310ff., for a robust assertion of the divine protection of the empire: 'the Roman state belongs to God, it does not need earthly arms'. Neither in Paul nor Corippus has the *Theotokos* ('Mother of God') taken her later role as protector of the city, but the idea of celestial protection is clearly established. See *Just. Nov.* 133 (539), for the military protection the prayers of monks etc. provide; Baynes (1955b) for divine protection of Constantinople.

10 Literally, 'nor did you miss the mark'.

11 24–40 refer to the conspiracy of Marcellus, Sergius and Ablabius, all here unnamed, scotched only a few weeks earlier in November 562: Mal., *Chronicle* 493, 494; Theophanes, *AM* 6055. Just as Procopius, *Bldgs.* 1.16–21, turned an earlier plot against Justinian, the Nika riots and the ensuing fire that destroyed the earlier church of Hagia Sophia, to the greater glory of the emperor, so Paul turns to advantage both the disastrous earthquake of 557, which

clearly from the tyrants who had often had personal knowledge of it,¹² that if you had him in your power alive, you would for certain turn straight to pity and mercy; in these too you conquer all mankind. (40) With compassion for the errors of life, you have groaned often at our transgressions, Best of Men. Often you moisten your kindly eye with tears, as kings will, grieving on our behalf. Especially when on seeing lack of self-control, life's housemate (45), you release everyone from their evil debts, like God, and hasten to forgive.¹³ You make petitions to yourself when the magnitude of the accusations does not allow others (50) to begin their entreaties. Indeed, you never allow another to exercise the pity which is pre-eminently yours. And, through the impious effrontery of our actions, you have occasion for intercession above.¹⁴

caused the dome of Justinian's replacement church of Hagia Sophia to collapse, and Marcellus' conspiracy. In the former case, Justinian's dynamism in repairing his church can then be shown; the latter illustrates God's unflinching protection of his devoted servant, the emperor. (See also 537–49 for more on this and other conspiracies against Justinian).

Paul fails to mention, however, two significant details: first, that one of the conspirators, Ablabius, had ‘through God’s grace’ (Mal. 493) tipped off the authorities, who arrested the conspirators when they later arrived in the palace to kill Justinian. Their ring-leader, Marcellus, a banker, immediately killed himself. Another conspirator, Sergius, escaped but, on being dragged from the church where he had taken refuge, denounced others, including more bankers, as co-conspirators. Some have accordingly seen this conspiracy as reflecting a wider tension between bankers and the government at a time of financial strain (see *Just. Nov.* 148 = Justin II *Nov.* 1; Mary Whitby [1985a]). Such tensions are not confined to late antiquity. The speed with which Justin II sought to repay debts on his accession, and the emphasis Corippus gives to this, indicates the political priority he gave to building good relations with what we perhaps might call the ‘financial sector’: see Corippus, 2.357. See also Introduction, p. 74.

Secondly, he passes over the fact that Belisarius, who had saved the city as recently as 558/9 from an attack by Huns and Slavs, was, with his steward (*curator*), amongst those denounced as a conspirator. Put under house-arrest in December 562, he was in July 563 given back all his honours (Theophanes, *AM* 6055). The audience would have known that Belisarius was in disgrace when this poem was first declaimed.

12 Three Greek letters are missing from the text: Friedländer *ad loc.* surmised that the original meant something like ‘from their personal knowledge ($\langle\textit{math}\rangle\textit{onton}$) or experience ($\langle\textit{path}\rangle\textit{onton}$)’. He plumped for the former; Fobelli follows him, as do I. ‘Tyrrants’ is a grandiose, pejorative description of all who had opposed Justinian including, for example, Gelimer, the last king of the Vandals in N. Africa. After his defeat by Belisarius, he was brought to Constantinople for a triumph, then pensioned off with an estate in Galatia, in central Asia Minor: *Wars* 4.9. By extension, it is also applied here to the conspirators and would-be tyrants Marcellus and Co.

13 An echo of the (Christian) Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6.12): 'Release us from our debts, as we have also released our debtors.'

14 44–53 come close to portraying Justinian as not only acting like, but *imitating*, God

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Does he not take up arms against God Himself, (55) the man who is not willing for this Emperor to rule, a man who is gentle and kindly, and who gives benefits in moderation to friends and enemies alike?¹⁵ This is your salvation.¹⁶ This, Mighty Master, makes the soul of the empress, she who is blessed, all-excellent, lovely and all-wise (60), to intercede with God on your behalf, she who was your pious collaborator when alive. But when she died, she provided for your subjects a supportive oath, an unbreakable oath, (65) which you have not disregarded and would not willingly neglect.¹⁷

– the theme of both Agapetus and the *Dialogue* – although Paul does not use this language. This account of Justinian's mercy, even to conspirators, and his unfailing love of mankind, like God's, is echoed in *Bldgs.* 1.16. It also recalls Agapetus, chs. 23 and 37. But 53ff. portray Justinian also *interceding* on man's behalf with God, as in Romanos' *Kontakion* 54, *str.* 18.4–9 (*On Earthquakes and Fires*), and perhaps also in the apse mosaics in San Vitale in Ravenna (on which see Bell, forthcoming). In both those examples, Justinian is supported by his wife, Theodora, who died in 548. Note in particular how Justinian is depicted here as having a freedom of speech (53), here translated 'intercession', with God, denied to all other men. This freedom is the *parrhesia* that traditionally had been the prerogative of philosophers (and later holy men) with emperors. This privilege is also specifically attributed to Theodora (61).

15 For the idea that to rebel against the emperor is to rebel against God, cf. *Bldgs.* 1.1.21. Procopius claims the Nika rioters showed they were opposed to God as well as the emperor by their destruction of the previous Hagia Sophia. (This had been restored and rededicated in 415 by the Emperor Theodosius II [r. 408–50], following the destruction by fire of an earlier church, dedicated by Constantius II [r. as Augustus, 337–61], after rioting in 404 on the second banishment of the patriarch, John Chrysostom.)

16 The intercessionary power of Justinian's deeds is further developed. They serve, in Agapetus' language (chs. 59 and 72), as Justinian's 'ladder' to Heaven. See also 302–03, 307–10, and Macrides and Magdalino (1998), 73. Intercession on Justinian's behalf is also carried out by his wife, assisted by the patriarch: 979–80, 1027–29.

17 This obscure sentence, praising Theodora further, may mean (Friedländer, n. on 63, p. 268) that Theodora has granted her former subjects an oath permitting them to swear by her, just as by a saint – an oath that Justinian has not, nor would forswear. Paul Maas, quoted without citation by Friedländer, and now followed by Fobelli, takes it to mean that Justinian (and presumably his subjects) must carry out whatever he (or they) has been sworn to do on the memory of his wife: e.g. 'In Theodora's name, do X!' The idea that one can compel a person to do something by oath swearing is not uncommon in late antiquity, according to Maas, who provides examples, cited in Friedländer, including Procopius, *SH* 3.27. There may also be NT precedents (Matt. 26.63; 1 Thess. 5.27). This is all the more remarkable given Theodora's allegedly scandalous early life. But this did not stop her, while alive, from presenting herself as a great female religious patron, even perhaps greater than her husband: see the inscription still visible in the former church of Sts Sergius and Bacchus (now Küçük Aya Sofya), in Istanbul; full text in Ebersolt and Thiers (1979). Being a prostitute, or even an actress, was no bar to sanctity – see the partly fictional, but very popular C5 *Life* of the Antiochene actress, Pelagia, known as 'Pelagia the Harlot', or the C6 *Life* of Mary of Egypt, by Sophronius (?), which emphasises the importance of repentance. See *ODB* on both.

So much for these things. But grant courage to those who already wish to go to the temple.¹⁸ And let this too, pray, be among your marvels, that words should appear to describe the work (70) which conquers all things by the pre-eminence of its marvels. Evidence of the outstanding greatness of your marvels is the great love which the whole city nurtures for you, Mightiest King, and for your temple.¹⁹ For when you were celebrating the festival,²⁰ as was fitting, (75) immediately all the people, the senate and those who pursue the safe middle way of life, begged you to extend the days of the festival;²¹ you agreed; the days ran out; they begged again; again you agreed. By doing this repeatedly, (80) you richly extended the festival.

After these words had been spoken in the palace, there was an interval in the recitation, and the rest was spoken in the bishop's palace, in the presence

Given the exalted position afforded Theodora in this poem, one should note that although Theodora had died in 548, Justinian never re-married. All the evidence suggests he remained devoted to his late wife (e.g. returning from a rare visit outside his capital in 559, he prayed at her tomb and lighted candles to her memory: Peter the Patrician, *On the Ceremonies*, in Haldon [1990], 139). Her influence from beyond the grave is also registered in the appearance of her monogram on the entablature of the altar screen of Hagia Sophia (712–15) and on the silk altar cloth where Justinian and Theodora join hands with Mary (812–14), who is effectively replaced in the present passage by Theodora as intercessor for mankind. This replacement is the more striking at a period when the cult of the *Theotokos* ('Mother of God', aka Mary) was of growing importance: Averil Cameron (1978, repr. 1981). See also, more generally, Macrides and Magdalino (1988).

18 The first part of Paul's poem was declaimed in the imperial palace; the party, including the emperor are now about to move to the patriarchal palace (see the *lemma* following 80 below). For the use of the classicising word 'temple' for 'church', see n. 6 above.

19 The most explicit claim of the love of the people for Justinian (see also 41ff. and the attitude of the personification of Rome, almost that of a loving daughter, and Justinian's paternal response: 248–54.). It is far from clear, not least from *SH* and the *Dialogue*, that this would be universally true, certainly of the upper classes.

20 *Sc.* of re-dedication.

21 All sections of society, that is, had asked for the festival to be extended. This three-way division of the population is less common than simply dividing them between 'rich' and 'poor', or offering more elaborate stratification (as e.g. in the *Corpus*, the *Dialogue*, or *On Strategy* 1–3) which would arguably be out of place in a poem. It traces its ancestry at least back to Aristotle (*Politics* 4.11.1295b1–96b2), who sometimes employs a tripartite analysis of the population into 'rich' (*euporoi*), 'poor' (*aporoï*) and 'middling' (*mesoi*). The idea, which has crept into the scholarly tradition, that the reference to the 'people' (*demos*) is to the circus and theatre factions (often known as *demoi*), while the reference to the 'safe, middling' class may denote the clergy, rests on a misunderstanding about the social role of the factions: Alan Cameron (1976); Bell (forthcoming).

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of Eutychius,²² the most holy patriarch. The iambs below were spoken as a preface.²³

We have come to you, gentlemen, from the hearth of the king, to the hearth of a King who is the all-greatest, the creator of all things, on account of whom victory inheres in our Master here. There, he who presides over offices <of state>²⁴ (85), after seating himself in the audience following his speech, graciously gave us his attention; here, he who presides over sacred matters is present to our sight: may he too be gracious.²⁵

May none of these on hearing me rebuke my words (90).²⁶ For someone may well say: 'Sir, what absolute rubbish you talk! Are you asking this man to be gracious to your words, he who is the abode of all goodness and clad in all graciousness? You are in just the state you would think a man was in (95) if he were to beg, importunately insisting that the sun should rise by day, that light should be bright, or words be words.' I would not deny that

22 Eutychius served as patriarch from 552–65, and 577–82. He was appointed patriarch by Justinian, since he was a theological supporter of the emperor in the dispute over the so-called 'Three Chapters', which both men condemned. (The so-called 'Three Chapters' were certain writings by the dead theologians Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret and Ibas, which were offensive to Miaphysites, whom Justinian sought to reconcile without losing the support of the pope and the Western churches: see Gray [2005] and Sotinel [2005].) Eutychius was bundled into office with almost indecent haste: Mal., *Chronicle* 486; Theophanes, *AM* 6044; Eustratius, *Life of Eutychius*. He presided at the 2nd Council of Constantinople in 553, and delivered a tactical victory for Justinian, though the chief goal of the Council, the reconciliation of the Eastern Miaphysite churches, was not achieved. (Miaphysites held, and hold, in contrast to the Orthodox/Catholic mainstream, that Christ had one, not two natures, as affirmed at the Council of Chalcedon in 451). Relations with the emperor cooled, and Justinian sacked him in 565, owing to his opposition to the emperor's apparent late espousal of apthartodocetism (the 'heretical' doctrine that Jesus' flesh was incorruptible, not only after the resurrection but from his conception). After the death of his successor, John Scholasticus, Justin II (r. 565–78) restored him. Little of his work survives, although he is an Orthodox saint. For more on Eutychius, see Averil Cameron (1988 and 1990, repr. together 1996); Mary Whitby (1987b).

23 An original MS heading or *lemma*.

24 That is, the emperor.

25 Note the antithesis between 'there ... he who presides over offices of state; 'here ... he who presides over sacred matters'. This is more striking in Greek, as Fobelli notes *ad loc.*, where the two references are almost homophones: ... *ton geron ho prostates* (of the emperor); ... *ton hieron ho prostates* (of the patriarch). Cf. 130–32 where the poet echoes himself, more effectively in Greek than English, in his use of the word 'right' (*khre*) in 130 and 132.

26 Although 81–131 are nominally a panegyric of the patriarch, Paul has remarkably little concrete to say about him (the same is true in his concluding panegyric of the patriarch in 967–1029). Paul in fact concentrates here on whether his verses will be adequate to the task of praising such a great man and the church.

this is how it is, but looking to my goal (100), which is the greatest of all and unsurpassable, I fear the contest. And yet I begin to take courage again, from the very source of my previous fear. For if there were any hope for a mighty discourse to be matched with the most beautiful temple of all (105), then it would have been perilous to strip for bouts in which victory was put at risk.²⁷ But since we all know that a word would never appear which would run an equal race with the emperor's achievements, and that of those very achievements (110), the greatest of all is the foundation of this temple, we ought not to stand spiritless, afraid in the face of a foregone conclusion, but stir up all our enthusiasm, to the limit of our strength. Freedom of speech is a worthy thing in a man (115).²⁸ For if the master had not created the temple with boldness and a lofty spirit, a sight that exceeds all expectation, the city would not have proceeded to such good cheer and happy indulgence (120). Why then is it unreasonable that there should now be an appropriate freedom and impunity for words? For whatever they may in their weakness neglect, this can be added by the eyes. However it is no Attic bean-eater who is their judge (125),²⁹ but rather men of piety and mercy in whom both God and the emperor rejoice: they order cities, they hold the reins of all things, both words and actions. Is it then right that upon them should march these verses (130), cajoled to outspokenness by demagoguery? It is right to do this; I will repeat myself, appearing like an echo of my own words. And so I will return to the great emperor.

Description of the Great Church by Paul the Silentiary, son of Cyrus.³⁰

(135) Today the clash of shields does not bear me on, nor do I hasten to celebrate a victory, Western or Libyan, nor yet do I beat out a reverberating

27 A grandiose way, via an extended sporting metaphor, of saying that if there were a real competition between Paul's verses and the church, it would be too risky to undertake.

28 In 115, 121 and 131 the same Greek word is used for freedom of speech: *parrhesia*. In effect, Paul is claiming for himself the same freedom of speech that Justinian and Theodora enjoy with God (53 and 61 respectively) – although in Paul's case, this outspokenness is simply freedom to glorify the emperor and his works!

29 'Attic bean-eater' (*kuamotrox*) is a disparaging reference to the hungry judge in Aristophanes' *Knights* 41, who eats the beans that were used in Athenian courts to vote in trials. In other words, here by contrast there are really worthy judges: Fobelli *ad loc.* citing Fayant (2001), 156, n. on line.125.

30 Another original *lemma*. For Paul and his father see Introduction, p. 14, also *PRLE* IIIA, 374 'Cyrus' and *PRLE* IIIB, 979 'Paul'. From this point onwards, the metre switches to grand epic hexameters. This is reflected in the grandeur of the verses that immediately follow.

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rhythm over trophies for tyrant-slaying. Let the glories of Mede-slaying works remain unproclaimed today.³¹ Peace, rich in prosperity, nurse of cities, (140) whom our Lord has embraced more than Victory of the lovely helmet, come now; exulting in city-preserving labours, let us sing in holy hymns of the house which surpasses all the most glorious battles,³² beneath which alone every divinely inspired, glorious, high-roofed building has cowered low. (145) But come, fruitful Rome,³³ and garland our life-giving Emperor,

31 This language could imply the existence of other (including military) panegyrics, whether by Paul (on whom see Introduction, p. 84) or others. None survive, though John the Lydian admits to having delivered a panegyric (*On Magistracies* 3.28). More revealing of imperial ideology is the reprise here of the emperor's claim to military greatness and the stress laid, in a church festival, on 'slaughtering Persians' ('Medes', in further archaising language).

The latter, apart from representing the greatest long-term strategic threat to the empire – Antioch, the third city of the empire, had been sacked as recently as 540 – were also the only other civilised, great power with which the Romans had dealings. They were 'the enemy of choice' in F. Millar's (1982) phrase, whose defeat was accordingly doubly prestigious. Justinian re-used an earlier equestrian statue of Theodosius II, placing it in front of the Senate House in 542 in order to show himself facing down the Persians. (This statue is reproduced on the cover of this book.) Paul himself refers to this at the end of his *Description of the Ambo* (298ff.). For more detail: *Bldgs.* 1.2 and n. 4 above. The *GA* contains two epigrams (6.62 and 63) which decorated another equestrian statue of the emperor in the Hippodrome, recording an earlier Justinianic victory over the Persians leading to the so-called 'Eternal Peace' of 532. In the same period (533), one of the *Prefaces* to the *Corpus*, *C. Tanta*, alludes to these victories over Persia as part of its portrayal of Justinian as the great conqueror.

32 I.e. Hagia Sophia, which is greater than all victories and overshadows all other buildings, however magnificent.

33 Paul now pays tributes (again!) to Justinian's imperial prowess, here showing him metaphorically imposing the yoke of slavery upon the world (147, 158), thereby underscoring its importance as a key criterion of Justinian's legitimacy. But this is of secondary importance here to proclaiming the ascendancy of Constantinople, whose traditional title was 'New Rome', over 'her mother', old Rome. Personification of Rome was new in neither literature nor art: she figures, for example, in the Latin poetry of Claudian (370–404) and Sidonius Apollinaris (430–87); the Gothic king of Italy, Theodoric (r. 471–526) was portrayed in his palace in Ravenna between the personifications of Ravenna and Rome (Diehl [1901], 633). She also figures in 220ff. below. See Mary Whitby (1985b). Rome and Constantinople were described in a speech directed at the emperor Constans II, in Rome, as the 'old and new Rome' and as the 'two queens' of the empire by the Pagan court rhetorician and philosopher, Themistius (c.317–88), *Or.* 3. What is innovatory (and provocative) is Paul's personification of Rome to denote *Constantinople*, as in *CJ* 1.17.1.10, but here without any gloss. 'Old Rome' is relegated to e.g. 'Latin Rome' or 'your mother on the Tiber (mod. Tevere)', the river that runs through that city, 'whose daughter now excels' her through Justinian's achievement in Hagia Sophia. While not overtly Pagan in character, this dialogue, in which Rome has all the attributes of a Pagan goddess, illustrates once more the fineness of the border-line separating Christian from 'Hellenic' culture in this period. For the great political *and* religious significance of this

clothing him abundantly with pure hymns, not because he has fitted your yoke-band on the nations of the earth, nor because he has extended the immeasurable spaces of your throne beyond the outermost boundaries, over against the shores of Ocean, (150) but because, by raising this infinite temple about your arm,³⁴ he has made you more brilliant than your mother on the Tiber who bore you. Give way, I say, renowned Roman Capitol, give way! My Emperor has so far overtopped that wonder as great God is superior to an idol! (155) And so I desire that you, Anthusa of the golden tunic,³⁵ sing of your sceptre-bearer in honey-voiced measures. For indeed, not only did our Lord, equipping his hand with weapons, enslave innumerable barbarians with his shield-piercing spear, to make them bow their untamed necks to your yoke-straps, and cower before the yoke of your justice; but even (160) black Envy himself,³⁶ shrieking insolently, sank beneath the bow of the Emperor, protector of the city, and, torn by a shower of arrows, crashed broken down, and by his fall hollowed out the dust. But you too, first born Latin Rome, come, (165) singing in harmony with fresh-budding Rome; come, rejoicing that you see your child surpassing her mother, for this is the delight of parents.³⁷

Men, whose task is to honour the holy ordinances, come, I beg you, cast off the garb of sombre grief and, rejoicing, (170) clothe your limbs in snowy

assertion of precedence, given the persistent tensions between the emperor and the pope, see Introduction, p. 3, and Sotinel (2005).

34 Paul represents Hagia Sophia as a magnificent armlet to adorn (personified) Rome.

35 *Anthousa*, a personified epithet of the capital, means 'blooming/blossoming'. According to Dagron (2003), ch. 1, this word, used in the dedication ceremonies of Constantinople in 330, was a translation of 'Flora', an epithet regularly applied to (old) Rome. It is paralleled by the representation of Constantinople on coins holding a cornucopia, or horn of plenty: Toynbee (1947, 1953).

36 This personification recalls Callimachus, the highly influential Alexandria-based poet of the C3 BCE: see his *Aetia* ('Origins') fr. 1, *Hymn to Apollo* 105. Callimachean echoes are also audible at e.g. 195 (Telchines). Such repeated allusions show the importance Paul attached to registering his allegiance to the approach of this versatile, recondite and genre-bending literary artist whom the Romans later took as the exemplar of sophistication: Quintilian, *Institutes* 10.1.58. See Introduction, p. 85. It is surely no accidental allusion in such a self-conscious writer as Paul that both the Telchines and Phthonos appear in Callimachus as critics of his own poetry, claiming it is insufficiently Homeric! But they confuse quality with quantity and Phthonos is duly put in his place by Apollo. *Phthonos* ('envy') is also used in Christian contexts of the devil: *PGL s.v phthonos*. This image, therefore, has both Hellenic and Christian overtones. Cf. Sophronius, *Anacreontic* 21.18ff. for 'Phthonos' shooting down an enemy with bow and arrow.

37 The preceding section (145–67) has been plausibly taken (e.g. by Mary Whitby [1985b]) as an example of the renewal of the empire (*renovatio imperii*) to which Justinian laid claim, however implausible this was in contemporary circumstances.

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robes.³⁸ After wiping the five-year tear from our eyes, let us sing rhythmic hymns with auspicious lips.³⁹ The sceptre-bearer of the Ausonians⁴⁰ has opened on earth the bolts of the heavenly gates, (175) he has spread wide the doors of joy to all our festivities, he has dulled all cares.⁴¹ For from the time when our <two> Lords'⁴² most mighty work crashed down, there was unabating mourning throughout the city. Be gracious to my bold tale, be gracious, Mighty Guardian of the Earth, may you pardon my verses, even if I provoke (180) your ear a little. For delight in your great works has super-vened and buried pangs of gloom in the streams of Lethe.⁴³ The light of the sun is more radiant to the wayfarer after a wintry night, and the longed-for calm is more cheering to sea-roaming men after waves. (185) Be gracious, Mighty One, be gracious to my bold tale.

Now, although mounted on mighty foundations, the wonderful vault of the hemisphere collapsed, and shook all the foundations of the house of holy mysteries; all the depths of the foundations in the city leapt up, (190) the earth groaned long beneath, and murky dust, mingling with the clouds of the air, hid the midday sparkle of the clear sky of heaven. But, blessed Christ, you stretched a hand over your seat, and did not allow the malicious Telchines⁴⁴

38 That is, the priestly component of the audience, headed by the patriarch, Eutychius, on whom see n. 22.

39 'Five-year tear' refers to the period (of alleged weeping) between the damage caused to the dome in the earthquake of 557 (though it only actually collapsed during restoration in 558), and the re-dedication in 562 (Mal., *Chronicle* 488ff.).

40 That is, Justinian, here (and later) poetically described as king of an ancient Italian-Sicilian people, by extension, the Romans. Ausonia can be a poetic metonym for Italy in Vergil, the Roman epic poet of the Augustan age: e.g. *Aeneid* 10.54; *Ausonii* (Ausonians pl.) can denote Italians as in *Aeneid* 7.233, or 12.834. cf. n. 53 below for Agathias' usage of 'Ausonius'.

41 This language echoes Ps. 23.7 'Lift up your gates you rulers, and be lifted up you everlasting gates, and the King of Glory shall come in ...' This was sung, in the presence of the patriarch, Eutychius, who held up the Gospels at the re-dedication of Hagia Sophia on 24 December 562 (Mal., *Chronicle* 495). Note, however, that Justinian is still given the credit, even though the patriarch is present.

42 Note the plural. Here as elsewhere (269–70, 554–55), Hagia Sophia is presented as the work of *both* Justinian *and* his empress, Theodora. My insertion of 'two' merely underscores the point. It is further reinforced by the monograms of the imperial pair, still to be seen on many capitals within the former church. Cf. n. 17.

43 In Greek mythology, the river (*Lethe*) in the underworld, to drink of which leads to forgetfulness.

44 Telchines were malicious minor deities, inventors of the art of metalwork, but perhaps better known as spiteful sorcerers, whom Zeus attempted to drown – and to whom Callimachus had given prominence as his critics: *Aetia* fr. 1. Paul may have chosen them to suggest their envy of Justinian's great creation; but he is simultaneously allying himself with Callimachus'

to foul your earth with the blood of slain men. For you neither endured (195) to look, with the all-seeing glance of your undefiled eye, upon blood shed in the precincts of the bloodless sacrifice.⁴⁵ Nor again did the broad-breasted temple, held fast within the bonds of craftsmanship, excellent in its fruit, sink down as far as its foundations. But the curve of a single arch slipped away (200); the Eastern one and a portion of the sphere were mingled with the dust. And one part was on the ground, while the rest still (a wonder to behold), just as if without support, was hanging there, companion to the breezes. And every man groaned, stricken with gloom. (205) May no-one smite my Siren with an indignant word for walking along the path of forgotten grief.⁴⁶ Laughter is sweeter after weeping, so is health after sickness. The flame streaming forth from the sky did not cause men such grief, when it burnt up the surface of the earth, leaving it without vegetation, (210) or when streams of countless torrents hissed as they were dried up; nor yet when fiery heaven gaped wide over the fruit-bearing earth, and opened the gates of destructive rain, and confounded dry plains with the surges of the sea.⁴⁷

But my sceptre-bearer, when he heard about the horrible grief, (215) did not long hide the blaze of his mind. He could not endure resting quiet and

artistry and against their critics (see n. 36). Note that, here and elsewhere (221 and 273), Paul casts evil *Pagan* deities as Justinian's enemy.

45 No one in the church was killed, that is, by the collapse; while the church, Paul continues, was not by any means wholly destroyed. 'The precincts etc.': that is, the site of the Christian eucharist.

46 The Sirens were, in myth, originally malicious enchantresses who, by their singing, lured sailors to their deaths. Most famously, however, Odysseus, the hero of Homer's *Odyssey*, escaped them by a ruse. 'Siren' here, however, according to a usage dating from the C5 BCE, is equivalent to 'Muse', in turn equivalent to 'Song/Poem' – the meaning here. So, 'don't smite my Siren' is a characteristically and exaggeratedly poetic way of saying 'don't criticise my song'.

47 That is, a range of natural catastrophes did not cause such dismay (Paul tactfully refrains from adding, 'or such damage to the standing of the emperor at a very difficult time for him') as the collapse of the dome in an edifice in which so much of Justinian's prestige and charismatic authority were invested. The reference, according to Friedländer *ad loc.*, is simply to lightning in a severe thunderstorm leading to forest fires and later catastrophic floods. The language, however, follows Paul's influential predecessor, Nonnus, who describes precisely such a deluge, in which squid came to hunt hares, following the murder of the 'first' Dionysus (*Dionysiaca* 6.229; Fayant [2001], 157, on lines 208–13). There is no compelling evidence for Fobelli's view *ad loc.* that there is here a reference to the two floods of Genesis (7.10–12: Noah; 19.24ff: Sodom and Gomorrah). The echoes between Genesis and Nonnus are noticeable, however: Deucalion, who features briefly in Nonnus' deluge, was, in Greek mythology more generally, the survivor of a flood sent by Zeus to punish the sins of men of the age of bronze: *OCD s.v.* 'Deucalion'.

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downcast in the bonds of idle hesitation; he shook off the pang of short-lived grief, and darted to the labour of re-building the house. Shield-brandishing Rome⁴⁸ stood beside him and said: (220) ‘All powerful Lord, of blessed portion, abode of justice, mainstay of cities, jealousy has overpowered me. But it is a sign of grace in Megaira⁴⁹ that it is when you are alive⁵⁰ that she has assaulted the beauty of Rome. A gaping ulcer is welling up in my breast.⁵¹ But Blessed One (for you have the power to sprinkle medicines upon the ulcer), (225) stretch out your hand, the nurse of prosperity which flows with riches. By directing it with your guiding bridle, I have made all things subject to your trophy-bearing triumphs.⁵² Both the Median lord and the Celtic war-cry are quiet,⁵³ and the (230) Indian has given the sword of

48 This dialogue between Justinian and a personified *New Rome*, i.e. Constantinople, here represented as a warrior responsible for the emperor’s victories, has models in the work of Claudian (370–404) and Sidonius Apollinaris (430–87). In these, (Old) Rome engages in dialogue with Pagan divinities or with the emperor; see Mary Whitby (1985b) and Introduction, p. 86.

49 The Erinyes (or Furies) were originally chthonian (underworld) powers of retribution for wrongs and blood-guilt with a long literary history: the name ‘Erinys’ even occurs in Linear B (*erinu* KN Fp 1). In later writers, there are three, including Megaira. Here she seems simply a personification of malice and envy: in Greek, *megairein* means to envy or begrudge. The passage again echoes Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 31.79. For Pagan deities representing Justinian’s enemies, see n. 44.

50 And, she implies, can therefore put right what Megaira (and jealousy) have done.

51 The ‘ulcer’ refers to the damage caused by the earthquake. That the damage was to the dome makes the choice of a breast ulcer especially appropriate.

52 ‘All things...’: language that, once again, makes Justinian sound godlike.

53 226–34: his empire stretches from the East to the far West (‘the Ocean’), illustrated wherever possible by reference to Justinian’s own victories. Thus Paul takes in Africa (here denoted by both ‘Libya’, and Carthage, the former capital of that kingdom [nr. modern Tunis] and of the earlier Roman province of Africa); the ‘Celts’ – a classicising allusion to Germans (i.e. Goths and Franks) who had only just been defeated in Italy: Agathias, *Histories* 1. 2; and the Persians, with whom the ‘50 Year Peace’ had been concluded in 562. This picture of the extent of Justinian’s empire is reinforced in the listing of the sources of the materials for Hagia Sophia (and their wealth) in 79–80, 387–88, 391ff., 439ff., (best of all) 512–32, 620–46, 673–80 below (most of those not translated here can be found in Mango [1986], 80–91). Compare, for a similarly disingenuously flattering portrayal of the empire’s size, Agathias’ poem (*GA* 4.3b.95) in which ‘Ausonius’, the personification of Rome, who has travelled throughout the known world, complains that he has ‘never stayed in a foreign land ... because it was all held by our wise emperor! See also Introduction, p. 2, and line 15 above with note.

Paul’s list is, however, as befits a panegyric, tendentious: for example, (Celtic) ‘Gaul’ was never reconquered (even if the Franks were defeated in Italy), while the peace treaty with Persia required payment by the Romans of 30k *solidi* a year, with the first seven years to be paid immediately (Menander Protector, fr. 6.1). Paul is, therefore, putting favourable ‘spin’ on the recent agreement.

friendship to your throne, bringing elephants and sea-pearls.⁵⁴ Carthage has bent the knee in slavery before my trophies. Towards me every merchant-ship directs life-bringing hope, watching the circling course of the two Bears,⁵⁵ so that I may hand out to my children affluent prosperity; (235) and the winds blow fair, bringing merchandise over the seas.⁵⁶ These things follow

54 To the theme of Justinian's military greatness and his diplomatic outreach are now added references to friendly relations with Eastern states: the reference to 'elephants' may reflect Mal., *Chronicle* 484, who reported the arrival, in 549/50, in the capital of an 'Indian' ambassador with an elephant which was paraded round the Hippodrome. Later, it broke out of its stable during the night, killing or maiming several people (Theophanes, *AM* 6042). There is no evidence of another such embassy or an elephant around the period of Paul's poem, which is not to say that high-level contacts ceased.

The word 'Indian' is potentially confusing. It was common at this period to refer to Ethiopia and adjacent lands in southern Arabia as 'India': see Mango and Scott's (1997) note on Theophanes, *AM* 6042. But the general character of the long-standing Roman interest in this region is clear, even if details of diplomatic, religious and military contacts are likely to remain obscure. In essence, as part of its wider hostility to Persia, emperors wished to frustrate Persian expansionism in the area, prevent Persian control of the silk trade (when all silk was imported from China), and spread Christianity. Byzantine interest in the region was perhaps greatest during the Himyarite Wars in southern Arabia (mod. Yemen), when Justin I provided ships to the king of Axum (on the modern Eritrea/Ethiopia borders) to assist his conquest of southern Arabia, following massacres of Christians by the Jewish king of the region, Abu Nuwas. This was intended to have the further benefit of denying the region to Persia, which nevertheless eventually occupied it in the 570s. Under Justinian in 531, for example, Procopius reports (*Wars* 1.20.9–10) that an embassy was sent to 'Ethiopia' to recruit two local powers, the Ethiopians and the Homeritae, to his Persian war, with the objective of thereby freeing from Persian control trade links with India, the silk trade above all, and thus enabling Ethiopian merchants to profit – and Romans 'no longer to be compelled to pay over their money to the enemy'. Unfortunately, Persian merchants controlled the trade in Ceylon.

Photius, *Bibliotheca* 3, provides background to this relationship and the region, drawn from the (lost) account of one Byzantine ambassador, Nonnosus, to Ethiopia and surrounding countries. The chief ancient sources also include Procopius (see above); Mal., *Chronicle* 433, 457–58, 484; Theophanes, *AM* 6035, 6042; Ps. Dionysius of Tel-Mahre (who incorporates John of Ephesus) 53ff. in TTH ed. Bury (1958), vol. 2, 322ff., provides a narrative overview; Mango and Scott's (1997) commentary on the relevant passages in Theophanes, noted above, is invaluable, as is Greatrex (1998), Appendix 1. Greatrex (2005), 501–03, now provides the best short introduction to a difficult subject. See also line 990 with n. 95.

55 The two constellations, Ursa Major and Ursa Minor. *Ursa* means 'bear' in Latin.

56 Paul now depicts Constantinople as the thriving centre of international trade. He thus recalls Paul's contemporary, Cosmas Indicopleustes, who represented such economic success as a mark of divine favour. Cosmas also cites the international acceptability of the standard Byzantine coin, the *nomisma/solidus*, as evidence that God would underwrite the empire until the end of time: Cosmas, *Christian Topography*, 3.5.2; 2.77. The attraction of Constantinople as a commercial hub reflected, for example, its size, as the biggest city in the empire; its wealth, in part the result of its receipt of provincial revenues; and its position as capital and home of a

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upon your labours; but pray, Sceptre-bearer, do not let your wonderful work be cast upon the treasure-heap of all beauty under the streams of Lethe.⁵⁷ For never, Lord, even though the peoples of the boundless earth cower down before you, (240) bent low before Ausonian ordinances,⁵⁸ even though you have built the whole city for me, never will you find another more brilliant symbol of your throne.' So she spoke, and longed to implant her lovely lips on the Emperor's feet.⁵⁹ But he stretched out to his familiar Rome a (245) gracious right hand, and raised her up as she bent her knee. And he smiled softly, so as to banish her measureless grief, and pronounced words full of carefree gladness: 'Away with sorrow, Queen of cities, do not trouble your heart. As no dart has conquered your shield, nor has any other barbarian spear smitten your unwavering spirit (250), nor yet may you bow down beneath cares that are hard to endure. Endure, Queen of all cities, do not tear your heart. For indeed, by my labours, I shall make you more celebrated, by rebuilding the finely curved summit of the temple.'

(255) So he spoke, and hastened to the sanctuary, and his deed was surely swifter than the accompanying word. For in his haste he did not, according to custom, await his attendant shield-bearer, wearing the golden necklet on his unbending neck, nor any golden staff, ever the escort of lords, (260) nor the host of strong-footed youth excelling in deeds of prowess – a street company, well-armed and black shod.⁶⁰ And suddenly, from both

high proportion of the imperial elite, making it a great centre of consumption. Notwithstanding difficult currents, it not only possessed good harbours both on the Sea of Marmara and the Golden Horn, but it was accessible, via the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, to both the Aegean and wider Eastern Mediterranean; also to the Black Sea, including its east side (Colchis and Lazica in mod. Georgia), its north (Crimea, the Don) and the empire's Danubian provinces. For Byzantine trade, and the wider mercantile economy, see Laiou and Morrisson (2007).

57 I.e., 'do not let your great work in this church be forgotten'. For 'Lethe', n. 43.

58 Another reference to the subordination of nations to Roman law, whose codification and reform was one of the greatest achievements of Justinian; see e.g. line 7 above. 'Roman' is again 'poeticised' to Ausonian: see also e.g. 174, 346 and n. 40 above.

59 A reference to prostration (*proskunesis*) before the emperor as part of the *adoratio* customarily performed on entering the imperial presence. It was of Oriental origin and introduced in Rome in late antiquity under the emperor Diocletian (r. 284–305), as one of a range of measures to enhance imperial dignity. It continued under Christian emperors, including Justinian. Under the latter, the practice was extended to the empress, Theodora, and also involved kissing one foot of each of the imperial couple – to Procopius' disgust (*SH* 30.21ff.). It may be in recognition of the controversiality of this part of the ceremonial that Paul allows Justinian graciously to forestall Rome's kiss.

60 The extreme urgency of the emperor's response is emphasised by his disregard for the ceremonial, hinted at by Paul, to strengthen the effect that marked all public appearances of the emperor: Mary Whitby (1987). For some idea of what the emperor's entourage might have

sides, men came streaming together from all directions, the emperor before them; shields thudded amongst the close-packed crowds, and a confused din rang out. (265) But when he set foot in the temple and realised that the foundation of the house was unshaken, he turned his whole eager mind to the vast summit, and praised Anthemius' craftsmanship and his intelligence, which excelled in prudent counsel.⁶¹ <Anthemius> laid the first foundations of the temple; (270) he discharged the counsels of the nobly-toiling emperors,⁶² <and was> a man skilled both in the choice of the centre of a circle and the drawing of a plan.⁶³ He had implanted in the walls sufficient strength to resist the attacks, scarcely to be endured, of a hostile demon. For <the temple> did not collapse when its strongly supported peak was broken, (275) but rested its foot unshaken on its sound foundations. And, on the pre-existing walls, the guide of the great throne among the Ausonians rebuilt the beauty of the faultless head.⁶⁴

But who could sing how, with lofty adornment, (280) he restored the temple to life? Who is capable of describing the wise counsel of the wide-

looked like and worn in normal circumstances, Friedländer (line 260 n., p.274) drew attention to the C6 apse mosaic of Justinian surrounded by his entourage and the local archbishop, in San Vitale, Ravenna.

61 Anthemius of Tralles (in Lydia), brilliant mathematician, physicist, engineer and architect of Hagia Sophia, on which his fame rests: Downey (1948); Huxley (1959). He died c.558. His virtues are similarly enumerated in *Bldgs.* 1.1, which also mentions his colleague, Isidore of Miletus, independently distinguished as a mathematician, but omitted here. This could suggest Anthemius was the principal architect, although both are praised together in a later passage (553ff. – not translated here).

Both Friedländer and Fobelli see poor construction in the poem at these points; Mary Whitby (1985a) has speculated that, in a final revision, Paul would have eliminated one of the two *mini-encomia*. One may also contrast Procopius' praise (in his panegyric *Bldgs.*) of the immense trouble Justinian took to get the right men for this job, not just the two architects, with his unqualified denunciation in the *SH* (21.7–25) of the allegedly venal creatures he normally sought out to do his work. Such is the difference between panegyric and invective. But criticism of the original architect's work, facilitating the collapse, can be found in Agathias (*Histories*, 5.9.4) and Theophanes (*AM* 6051). Mango and Scott (1997) reject Theophanes' account of how Justinian allegedly intervened to correct the engineers' mistakes. The architect responsible for the reconstruction work after the collapse, Isidore of Miletus *the Younger*, nephew of the architect of Justinian's church, is nowhere mentioned by Paul, though he features in *Bldgs.* 2.8, in respect of work he carried out in Palmyra, Syria, and also in Agathias (cited above).

62 A further reference to *both* Justinian *and* Theodora.

63 Both these descriptions pay tribute to Anthemius' (applied) geometrical abilities. I have expanded the text slightly in the interests of clarity.

64 'The guide...': that is, 'the emperor rebuilt the beautiful dome'.

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ruling Emperor, excellent in its offspring?⁶⁵ Those things, sceptre-bearer, we shall leave aside, as the province of the building craft, but I will come to the culmination of your nobly laboured efforts, having seen the newly accomplished miracle, (285) at whose sight Divine love thrilled the beams of every eye. Every mortal who has directed his eye to the glorious heaven has not long endured watching, with back-bent neck, the circling meadow clad with dancing stars; he has brought back his eye to a green hill and longed to watch a gushing stream with flowery banks (290), the ripe corn, the shelter of a wood thick with lovely trees, the frisking flocks, the coiling olive, the vine supported on luxuriant branches and a shining⁶⁶ calm upon the blue-green sea, (295) threshed by the sea-washed oars of the sailor. But if anyone plants his step inside the holy precincts, he is unwilling to withdraw his foot again, but, with enchanted eyes, he bends and twists his neck hither and thither. All satiety has been driven from out of the lovely-helmeted house.⁶⁷ (300) The ever-guarded Emperor has built such a flawless temple with the succouring counsel of immortal God.⁶⁸ For by your labours, Lord, you attract the everlasting benevolence of most glorious Christ. For you

65 'But who could sing how ...', the gist of these verses, is a conventional trope (Gk. *topos*) in panegyric. Compare Procopius' raptures on the same church in his *Bldgs.* 1.1, or the language used in *GA* 1.10.42–45 of Anicia Juliana in respect of her church of St Polyeuctus: 'What choir is sufficient to sing the contests of Juliana ...who accomplished a work worthy of her family.' But as anyone will testify who has visited Hagia Sophia and seen at first hand the breathtaking magnificence of the whole edifice that photography cannot wholly capture, it is hardly a cliché – *pace* Mark Twain, who described it in 1869 as 'the rustiest old barn in heathendom' (in Mainstone [1988], 5).

66 'Shining' translates *glaukopis* (lit. 'bright-eyed'), the most common epithet of the goddess Athena in Homer, the epic poet at the core of education throughout antiquity. It furnishes a further example of the fine line between Christian and 'Hellenic' culture. For it is hard to imagine anyone in Paul's audience not registering the association, especially since Homer never uses it as a colour word, or for anything other than the goddess. He does, however, use *glaukos* ('gleaming') once of the sea. (*LSJ*, see under *glaukos* and *glaukopis*)

67 286–99 explain that, for all its wonders, an observer will tire of twisting his neck to view heaven and all its stars. But he will not tire of gazing at the dome of Hagia Sophia. Cf. *Bldgs.* 1.1.61ff. on the spectacle 'of which no one ever has a surfeit'.

68 Connoisseurs of Nonnian poetics tell me that Nonnus does not usually attribute two adjectives to one noun and none to another as does the MS of Paul, which talks of the 'ever-guarded, flawless' temple, but leaves the emperor unqualified. On the other hand, the same phrase, 'always guarded', is applied to the church in 508, so it could be something of a standard epithet. There seems no obviously correct reading, and nothing of historical significance turns on it. On balance, therefore, like Fobelli and Friedländer earlier, I have hesitantly accepted Greife's emendation that attaches 'ever-guarded' to the emperor, whom it suits very well: cf. 17–21 for God's protection of Justinian.

did not wish to plant massive-shouldered Ossa on the peaks of Olympus, (305), or to drag Pelion above the neck of Ossa to make heaven scalable by mortal steps.⁶⁹ But having accomplished a work beyond hope through your pious labours, you have no need at all to step on mountains in order to dart up to heaven, but on the (310) streamlined wings of piety you ride to the divine firmament. But why do I delay in celebrating a feast day which banishes care? Why do I roll out my tale outside the temple? Let us go into the sanctuary; sing praises of God, Initiates,⁷⁰ invoking Him in supplication to assist my words.

The sickle's edge, lately blunted after the grape harvest, (315) was awaiting <next> summer's work of sheaves; and the sun, shaking his reins on the wing of the South wind, was driving to the heatless degrees of Capricorn, after leaving Sagittarius newly downcast.⁷¹ The august dawn came, and (320) the divine gate of the newly built temple groaned⁷² as it was opened, summoning inside both people and its guardian. As dark night wanes and the light of day grows greater for all, so in truth when the great temple appeared, the night of sorrows waned (325) and the bright gleam of joy spread over everyone. It was a deed befitting you, mighty sceptre-bearer, and befitting Rome, to have opened the door of the temple to your people as harbinger

69 Pelion and Ossa are mountains next to the sea in Thessaly in north-eastern Greece, adjacent to Mt Olympus. In the myth, the giants Otus and Ephialtes piled Ossa upon Olympus and Pelion upon Ossa in order to reach heaven, where they apparently had designs on the goddesses Hera and Artemis. The latter changed herself into a deer and stood between them, with the result that they shot each other in their efforts to shoot her. All this was co-ordinated somehow by her brother, Apollo, on the island of Naxos: *Odyssey* 11.305ff. and elsewhere. The phrase, to pile Pelion on Ossa, became proverbial. (*OCD* under 'Aloadae').

70 That is, 'priests'. *Mustes*, *mustikos* and cognates (whence English 'mystic' etc.) have a long history, going back to the secret rites of the goddess Demeter at Eleusis outside Athens, and of other gods, such as Dionysus, or later Isis and Mithras. The words were, by this time, already well-established in a Christian context: *PGL* under *mustes* etc.

71 314–20. The astrological image denotes the time of the re-dedication. Thus in autumn, the sickle, blunted after the recent grape harvest, awaits next year's harvest. Meantime, the sun descends towards winter and December, the month whose last zodiacal sign is Capricorn (21 Dec.–19 Jan.; referred to here in homage to the obscure and allusive C5 poet Nonnus [*Dionysiaca* 38.279] as 'the fishy goat'), when the re-dedication of Hagia Sophia began. Meanwhile, Sagittarius, literally, the 'shooter of darts' in our Greek text, and the preceding zodiacal sign (21 Nov.–20 Dec.) grieves that the sun has left him. Mary Whitby tells me that, since the sun enters Capricorn on 21 December, this imagery fits closely with the start of the re-dedication ceremonies on 24 December: see Introduction, p. 81 for this imagery as a prime example of Paul's 'poetic bombast' (Mango [1986], 56).

72 Literally, 'bellowed'. For the metaphorical use of this onomatopoeic word (*mukaomai*), see *Dialogue* 5.108 above

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of the feast of God immortal; it was fitting, that next after that day of divine wonder (330) came the birthday of life-giving Christ.⁷³ And now the night was finished, the guide of Dawn of the lovely foot, the night that invites us to joy, in which <Plato>,⁷⁴ the immortal herald of God, had welcomed the strains of the unsleeping choir in his wonderful precincts, where with mystic voice (335) the men of life-preserving Christ had rejoiced to utter night-long hymns, singing without pause. But when, after drawing back her shadowy veil, rosy-armed sunlight stole over the heavenly vaults, then all the people and each office-holder (340), responsible for discharging the commands of a mighty king,⁷⁵ assembled. Bringing gifts of thanksgiving to Christ the King, they sang reverent hymns with suppliant mouths, lighting the silver-white candles with nobly toiling hands. And the priest accompanied, and led off the holy choir, the much-hymned priest (345), whom the sceptre-bearer of the Ausonians had found worthy of the temple.⁷⁶ And all Rome's path of the broad ways was made narrow.⁷⁷ And when they had come to the Divine courts, all the people cried out in thanksgiving, and thought that they planted their steps in the undefiled heavenly vaults.

(350) Unbar the door to me, reverent initiates, unbar it, unbar the shrine of Divine wonder to my tale, and offer a prayer for my verses. For as we touch the starting-rope,⁷⁸ we must direct our eyes towards you ...

73 Paul means that the dedication ceremonies began on the day before Christmas, 24 December.

74 Night is here presented as the introducer and guide of dawn. The text in 333–34 is doubtful. One reading for the puzzling MS word is *laon*, a rare Homeric participle denoting 'waking', which is also employed by Agathias (*GA* 5.237). The alternative reading, *Platon*, has, however, the merit of making it clearer who is the subject of this clause. So I have followed Fobelli in reading *Platon* (which Friedländer could 'almost recognise in the corrupt *laon*', though could not finally bring himself on stylistic grounds to put in his text!). The reference is not to the ancient Greek philosopher, but to the church of St Plato, near the Forum of Constantine in the city centre. From here, according to Theophanes (*AM* 6055), the patriarch, Eutychius, led the re-dedication procession, accompanied by the emperor, to Hagia Sophia. According to *Bldgs.* 1.4.27–29, St Plato's had itself been restored by Justinian, under the reign of Justin I (i.e. before 527). Hence the symbolism of choosing it for the start of the Hagia Sophia re-dedication was particularly apposite from the emperor's point of view. An English translation of the opening *kontakion* (hymn) of the re-dedication ceremonies is in Palmer (1988).

75 Literally, 'each holder of a chair of office who discharges the commands ...'

76 The 'priest' is, of course, the patriarch Eutychius, the sceptre-bearer, Justinian

77 That is, the crowds following the patriarch and his entourage were so great that the Mese was packed. The Mese (mod. Divan Yolu) was the broad high street (literally 'Central' in Greek) of Constantinople leading from the Forum of Constantine, where the church of St Plato was located, to Hagia Sophia.

78 That is, the start of the *ekphrasis* proper.

[355–921 comprise a detailed description of the church as follows:⁷⁹

- 354–410: *the eastern part, including the conches (354–62), the sunthronon (i.e. raised tiers of seating behind the altar at the East end), the exedras (372–97), the half-dome (398–410). This is followed by a brief, rhetorical interruption (410–16);*
- 417–43: *the western part, including the imperial doors (423–24), the narthex (425–43);*
- 444–550: *the central space (444–550), including the pilasters, arcades etc. (448–80), the dome (481–531), mosaics (506–08), the roofing (512–31), the North and South walls (534–50);*
- 551–585: *the North and South aisles, including ‘metatorion’ reserved for the emperor;*
- 586–89: *the galleries;*
- 590–616: *the porticos, including the Western atrium and fountain (590–611) and the other porticos (612–16);*
- 617–72: *the decoration, above all the various marbles, on walls, in capitals, and in paving;*
- 673–806: *the silver furnishings, starting with the chancel (673–719), the golden altar-table (720–54), finally the altar-cloth (755–805);*
- 806–894: *the lighting, including the great crown of lights (810–38), the lights in the naves, the galleries and the dome (839–70), the lamps in the chancel (871–83) and other lights (883–94);*
- 895–920: *Hagia Sophia – symbol of the Divine light.*

There now follow (921–end) further panegyrics of emperor and patriarch. These balance those in the introduction to the Description (1–354).]

(921) Abide, O sceptre-bearer, I pray, for many revolutions of the years,⁸⁰ to bring light to both West and East; for upon you, much-hymned one, East and West know how to rest their cares. For you, in every sea-girded city of the earth, harbours preserve shining calm; (925) wrapping about in fair-bosomed embrace the outpouring wave; they soothe the foaming threat of

⁷⁹ This passage in italics is my insertion to explain what is omitted here. Lines 355–921 are largely translated in Mango (1986), 80–91. They are well illustrated, in photographs and diagrams, in both Mainstone (1988) and Fobelli (2005), from whom this ordering of material is largely taken.

⁸⁰ ‘May you live long’. An understandable wish – and concern – given that the emperor was in his eighties, with no successor designated: cf. *Dialogue* 5.167 with note.

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Nereus.⁸¹ And the water of rivers, roaring in its flood, has submitted; no longer is the robber current sullied by travellers; whoever has seen Mygdonian Sangarius in the land of Bithynia, (930) once exultant in his untamed streams, with his surface <now> spanned by a bridge of dressed stone, will not reproach the true rhythm of my verses.⁸² These things, blessed one of happy portion, (935) foster your long accumulation of life-bearing years; these things, together with Western, Libyan and Eastern triumphs, honour your power beside the rim of Ocean.⁸³ These things have often bowed low the necks of tyrants by the destructive daring of self-slaughtering hand before you have equipped your hands with weapons, (940) and have smitten the heads of others before you have learnt the news announcing acts of wrongdoing.⁸⁴ For if ever Justice, after briefly resting, brings before your feet one of your enemies, you immediately calm the storms of necessary anger, you immediately assume a merciful serenity, and (945) the bronze chain, which before was confining him in penal bonds, immediately opens the lock upon his neck. And you, directing upon him a glance of gentleness, instead of executing him, elevate to dazzling belts the man who before strove to smite your yoke-band.⁸⁵ (950) And you profit from the number of your

81 Nereus – an ancient sea god, endowed with great wisdom. Father, with Doris, of the Nereids, or sea nymphs (*OCD* s.v. 'Nereus'). Here, he simply denotes the sea.

82 928–33: thanks to Justinian, travellers need no longer fear being swept away by rivers in flood (and 'sully' them). His example is the (still standing) bridge over the River Sangarius (mod. Sakarya – some 30 km east of Nicomedia [mod. Izmit], near Adapazarı in north-western Turkey). The bridge also features in an epigram of Agathias (*GA* 9.641). Alan Cameron and Averil Cameron (1966), 9, argued for Agathias' priority and saw Paul as flattering him by imitation.

The epithet 'Mygdonian' gives a Homeric resonance to the Sangarius: according to Homer (*Il.* 3.184), Priam, king of Troy, went as an ally to Mygdon, the lord of the Phrygians, in their battle with the Amazons, a tribe of warrior women, at the Sangarius. The 'Mygdonians' were, more generally, a large tribe from Thrace who emigrated into Asia, so that 'Mygdonia' features in place names in Bithynia (where the bridge was built), Phrygia, and even Mesopotamia. For the relevance of this bridge to the dating of the poem, and still more of Procopius' *Bldgs.*, see Introduction, p. 92.

83 Military triumphs – again!

84 937–39 is a further reference to the conspiracy of 562 and the suicide of Marcellus: see 25–40 above.

85 940–49 refer to the conspiracy led by Artabanes and Arsaces in 548. This was frustrated even before Justinian had heard about it (*Wars* 7.32). After the failure of the plot, both were kept in the palace under guard but underwent no further punishment or disgrace. Faced with a military crisis in Sicily, however, Justinian dismissed all charges against Artabanes, who had a distinguished military record, and, in 550, appointed him 'Master of the Soldiers for Thrace' (*magister militum per Thracias*). He then sent him to take command in Sicily. He seems to

servants' limbs that the relentless tomb could cover;⁸⁶ vanquished by your serenity, thrice-august Emperor, much more than by the sword, the prisoner turns his whole mind towards you. Having darted from fear to love and trust in you, (955) he willingly enslaves his neck to your yoke-straps.⁸⁷ For you know how much mightier is love than constraint. You know too how often the bull, by heeding the pipe amidst pastoral flowers, avoids the sound of the shepherd's staff.⁸⁸

That is why Christ the Lord rose always as the guide of your labours:⁸⁹ (960) with His steering bridle, He keeps your dauntless counsels straight, whether there is need to bare the sword for war or to cover it. He also granted that you choose a God-fearing priest, who easily runs over all the rugged path of (965) four-fold virtue,⁹⁰ whom a Divine voice from Heaven set upon the most holy seat of Rome.⁹¹

But, turning aside a little from trophy-bearing hymns of successful warfare in your honour, let us direct our song towards the august priest.⁹² The hymn too for its part is, in some respect yours, Lord. (970) For Victory,

have remained in the West until 554. *PRLE* IIIA s.v. 'Arsaces' and 'Artabanus 2' respectively. Cf. 33–34 above for Justinian's alleged mercy and *Bldgs.* 1.1.10 for his alleged policy of pardoning conspirators. Pagans, heretics, intellectuals and gays, however, had it tougher – see Introduction, p. 2, and next note. Officials, both military and civil, wore belts denoting their rank. 'Dazzling belts' is a metonym for 'high office'.

86 If, that is, Justinian had not been merciful, these servants would not have survived to benefit him. One would never guess from Paul at the ruthless persecution, of varying intensity at varying times, of heretical communities or eminent citizens suspected of 'Hellenism', deplored by e.g. Procopius (*SH* 11.14ff.), but boasted of by the bishop, John of Ephesus (in Ps. Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, *Chronicle* 76), in a society in which it could be hard to distinguish political from religious loyalty. For persecution of homosexuals: *Just. Nov.* 77 and 141; Mal., *Chronicle* 435. The three main persecutions took place in 528–29, 545–46 and 562, the year of the re-dedication itself. Maas (1992), Bell (forthcoming), for the politics of persecution.

87 Here, in contrast to 159, a voluntary submission to Justinian is indicated.

88 Cf. Agapetus, ch. 19, for a more prosaic statement of the advantages for a ruler of goodwill over coercion.

89 Fobelli notes that Paul here employs the same verb (*aneste* – 'rose') used to indicate Jesus' resurrection, as claimed by Christians (Luke 24.46; John 20.9).

90 The four classical, 'political' virtues: wisdom, justice, courage and temperance (moderation), taken over from Hellenic antiquity, which also underlie the ethics of Agapetus and the *Dialogue*. See Introduction, pp. 29–30 and 38, for these virtues in panegyric.

91 *New Rome*, Constantinople, is meant. This is no assertion of Western, papal primacy.

92 Here begins the concluding eulogy of the patriarch. But Paul is careful not to pass over, even here as the immediately following lines show, the importance of the emperor's piety, including such good deeds as the appointment of Eutychius, in furthering his military achievements.

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coming by turns now from this quarter, now from that, rested a delicate garland on your head for your successful efforts in wars and your labours in protection of the city. For when, sceptre-bearer, in the fecund counsel of your mind, you appointed the great Initiate⁹³ to your sanctuary, (975) the assault of the evil-minded demon collapsed immediately;⁹⁴ immediately you routed the brutal onrush of all our passions, immediately you bound on the wreath of victory for your labours in protecting the city. But also, Most-hymned Father, Leader of the Holy Temple, grant me a loving ear. (980) By your seal, the glory of the emperor is protected; by your prayers, winged Victory has subjected the nations to the yoke of your sovereignty which preserves cities. And some, who exulted in clashing shields, the spear brings beneath the emperor's feet, but (985) countless other barbarian-speaking nations of the earth have gathered at Rome, because they have heard of the holiness, Thrice-prayed-for one, of your serenity. Just lately I saw the divine court thronged by black-limbed men. Enchanted by your divinely inspired voice, they voluntarily bowed both soul and neck (990) to the heavenly and earthly thrones.⁹⁵ Wretched are those who have not received your hand upon

93 The patriarch.

94 Reference unclear, although the image is analogous to the collapse of 'Phthonos' at 160ff. It could simply refer to the triumph of Eutychius' piety over evil, or, more likely, in such a politically charged text, to the 'defeat' at the Council of Constantinople (553) of those opposing the emperor's religious policies, most notably his (ultimately unsuccessful) attempt to reconcile his Eastern Miaphysite opponents. But, as Mary Whitby has reminded me, it could simply be a more general reference (not incompatible with the explanation above) to the discomfiture of demons when confronted by a holy man: cf. the demons whom Jesus commanded to leave a man they had possessed in Gadara, and enter into a herd of pigs instead (Luke 8.28ff.); also Romanos *kontakion* 2, *str.* 4.8ff., where the serpent who had tempted Eve flees at Jesus' birth.

95 Fobelli notes that we have no (other) information about 'black-limbed men' in Constantinople around 562/3. She, therefore, suggests that that this could be a reference back to the delegation of 'Indians' (more likely, 'Ethiopians'; see n. 54 above) in lines 229–30; this seems to correspond to Theophanes, *AM* 6042 (549/50) but which says nothing about religion. However, any such a request for Christian instruction etc. in that year seems odd as there is a detailed report of just such an Axumite (i.e. Ethiopian) request for it as recently as 542/3 (Theophanes, *AM* 6035). As Mango and Scott (1997) explain, in their comment on *AM* 6035, the dating is horribly confused. They argue instead for a date for this religious embassy as early as the reigns of Zeno (r. 474–91) or Anastasius (r. 491–518). One also recalls that the Christianity they *already* shared with Constantinople is presented by Justinian as a basis for an alliance against the Persians in 531 (*Wars* 1.20.9).

Yet that is no reason to dismiss what Paul writes: he is reporting something which he claims to have seen, literally, 'yesterday' (*khthiza*), which would also not easily be compatible with Mary Whitby's suggestion that these Indians were in Constantinople for the fifth ecumenical

their head, the hand which drives away sins hard to withstand, the hand which supports the impoverished, the hand which is the nurse of orphans and assuager of all distress. (995) For indeed, from birth, temperance and modesty have united you to holy ways of heavenly hope. Your meals and your divinely inspired purpose are both simple; simple is the bright gleam of your eyes, simple the steps of your feet and a simple word moves your lips. (1000) You do not cultivate a downcast, lowering, gloomy brow; you foster a heart which rejoices in Christ, and bear a kindly, gracious radiance; and, on your countenance, a gentle smile furrows your august cheeks. You bear these things as signs of your gentle-minded heart; for, seated unshaken in untumultuous serenity, you are inaccessible to the quick steps of anger. (1005) You have shaken off all the woes of material cares, but, opening up your kindly heart as a channel of piety, you direct a sympathetic eye towards human sufferings. (1010) The mortal whom you see is no longer a beggar;⁹⁶ for immediately on opening wide the treasure-store of a spotless mind, you surpass the Lydian riches of the torrent rich in gold,⁹⁷ and bestow wealth which flows like a river, poured forth from your hand. You are thoroughly familiar with all the glories of labours, ancient and more recent; (1015) with pure feet you travel every path in the holy meadow; the priestly rule has weighed your thoughts on the scales of righteousness.⁹⁸ That is why, through charming your mind with immaculate concerns, you have not endured to see holiness for sale, (1020) you have not trafficked in holy appointments, nor have you pointed out to profane men a path which should not have been theirs to tread.⁹⁹ And if anyone expects to induce you to favour them by

council held in Constantinople in 553, nearly ten years previously. Perhaps we should not worry too much about what may be unknowable. In any case, the silence of a chronicler is hardly cast-iron evidence of an event's not having taken place. Nor is Paul saying that his Africans were in Constantinople primarily (or at all) for religious reasons. They could just have been, in modern parlance, paying their respects to the patriarch. Paul may very well be doing no more than adding further lustre to the efforts Justinian made to promote his image as someone who spread Christianity to the ends of the earth: for example, Paul claims this for the emperor in line 5; Procopius, in *Bldgs.* 6.2.13–21, emphasises Justinian's conversion efforts in Libya and elsewhere. See also n. 54 above.

96 (My translation of) Friedländer's German translation.

97 The Pactolus, flowing down to Sardis, the chief city of Lydia in western Asia Minor, was a river celebrated in antiquity for the gold found within it.

98 That is, you have been weighed and not found wanting (or too light).

99 Not necessarily empty flattery. Ecclesiastical abuses were the subject of frequent legislation by Justinian. See e.g. *Just. Nov.* 6. The very fact that Paul thought to emphasise the point raises, as Friedländer saw, questions about the probity of the clergy more generally. Cf. *Dialogue* 5.69 for its concerns over priestly misbehaviour.

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gently fawning on you with gifts, you crush him heavily with a menacing rebuke – enough to wipe away the fog from his heart, enough to prove you (1025) disdain gold, and to teach the fool that it is meet that he who frequents pure sanctuaries should himself be pure.

May you continue to foster the realm of my emperor, blessed one, by your prayers; and may you continue to cleanse from Rome which neighbours the sea¹⁰⁰ every stain of sinful-minded life.

100 That is, Constantinople, a city surrounded on two of its three sides by sea. See the map below.

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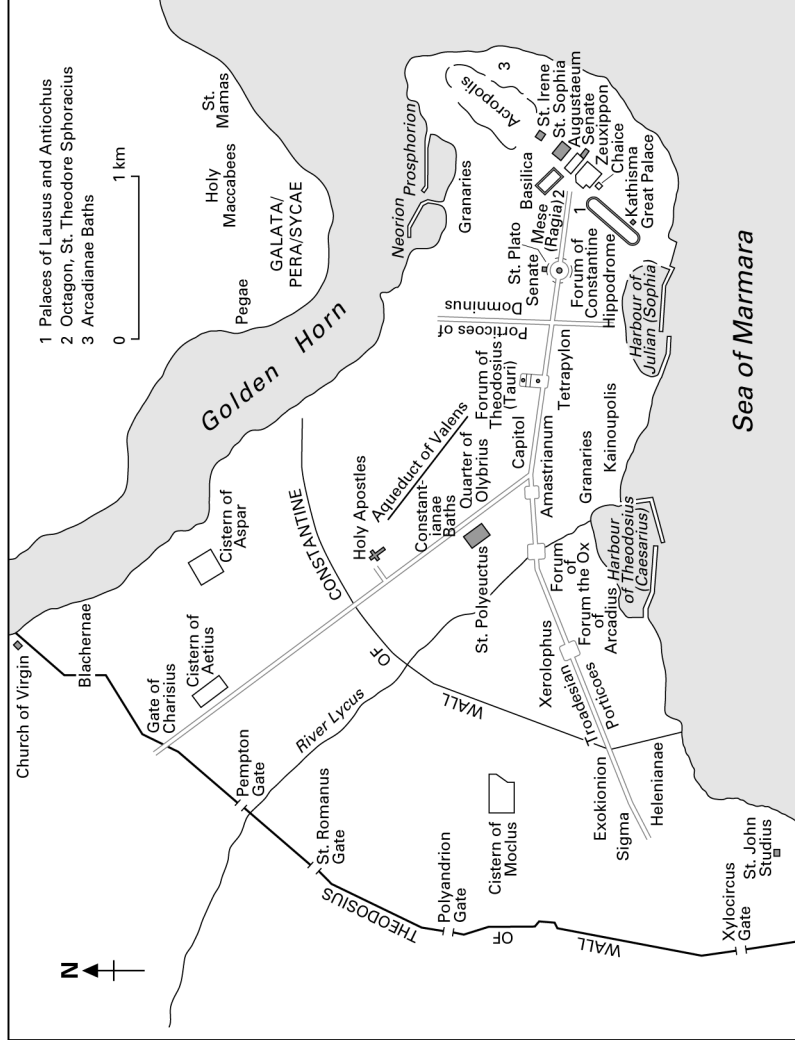
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CONSTANTINOPLE IN THE SIXTH CENTURY



Constantinople in the Sixth Century (adapted from *Chronicon Paschale* [TTH, Liverpool, 1989], courtesy of Mary Whitby and Michael Whitby)

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